

THY PEOPLE, MY PEOPLE.

EDWARDS, EDWARD J.



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THY PEOPLE, MY PEOPLE

Be not against me, to desire that I should leave thee and depart; for whithersoever thou shalt go, I will go and where thou shalt dwell, I also will dwell. Thy people shall be my people and thy god my god. The land that shall receive thee dying, in the same will I die; and there will I be buried. The lord do so and so to me, and add more also, if aught but death part me and thee.

Ruth 1:16, 17

Thy People, My People

E. J. EDWARDS, S.V.D.

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TO ALL THOSE LOYAL HEARTS AND TRUE, TOIL
ING IN THE FAR-FLUNG FIELDS OF THE MISSION
WORLD, WHO CAN BE TRULY CALLED THE
BEARERS OF THE BURDENS OF THE DAY AND ITS
HEAT, AND WHOSE SACRIFICES OF PATIENT PER
SEVERANCE, BITTER TOIL, AND VAST LONELINESS
ARE RARELY CHRONICLED SAVE IN THE ENDUR
ING RED OF CHRIST'S DIVINE HEART.

Foreword

IN THE May, 1935, issue of *The Sign* there was a column entitled "Mission Vignette," which closed on a sentiment that has often found echo in my mind: "Some day a gifted pen will be devoted to telling the drama of the Catholic Missions." Mine is not a gifted pen. If it has any merit it will, perhaps, be simplicity. I love the missionaries and their unassuming heroism and would like to bring to the notice of others the courage, the humor, the holiness which I have both seen and heard tell of from the lips of veterans in the mission fields.

Work that is apparently barren of results, sacrifices that appear fruitless, lives that are spent to purchase a forgotten death — that, in short, appears to be the sum total of most missionary lives. It was, too, in seeming, the sum total of the earthly life of the First Missioner, of Him who walked Palestine's plains and Judea's hillsides, scattering His miracles like the sower his seed, spending Himself without stint, only to be rewarded with the hard cross on a gallows hill. But just in that lies the mystery of apostolic endeavor — that out of unheralded pain and heart misery come unbelievable results, that the seed must die in order to give birth to the flower, that out of the depths of night will rise the glory of an exultant dawn.

There is no intention of describing any particular Reli-

gious Congregation of men or women in these pages or of alluding to the work of any missionary society. Rather the attempt has been made here to present to the reader a picture of what is the lot of our missionaries in the field afar today. By drawing upon the gathered experiences of many individual Catholic missionaries and by the careful study of diaries written by missionaries who are dead and gone, the author has enriched his own personal knowledge of what the missionary vocation involves.

Thus, while this is the story of but one missionary and of one particular field of missionary labor, the author has endeavored to assemble herein not only the essential elements of the outward activity of the missionary life, but also something of its inner energy, something of its spirit, something of that ambition for sacrifice which is so little spoken of and yet which gives point to it all.

So, as a symbol for the ready heroism, the personal holiness, the unquestioning devotion of the Church's vast army of missionaries, the author tries to portray in these pages the figure of a gallant missionary who would never have called himself great. He has known many such men, has lived with them and has worked alongside them, has watched the outer manifestations in them of the powerful dynamics that gave meaning to their lives. That dynamic spirituality is love of their Lord and Master, in whose service they are ever prepared to dare all things.

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Book One

Heralds of Christ

Chapter 1

IT WAS ten o'clock of a Monday morning in Manila. In the old Spanish section of the city, called Intra Muros, the traffic battered and jangled along the street, Calle Anda. The noise and confusion was made up of tiny motor cabs, picturesque *calesas*, and occasionally a luxurious American automobile.

In and out among the polyglot pedestrians on the narrow pavement, a black-gowned priest threaded his way. Tall and slim, with well-proportioned shoulders, he walked in all the ease and vigor of athletic young manhood. Under a dark slouch hat his pallid face with its firm chin was quiet and self-contained. The brown eyes held, at the moment, a half-worried look, for a wild-looking creature, with shirttails crazily flapping about, was trying to keep abreast of him. The hatless, broad-nosed native uttered no word but determinedly, by dint of pushing, skipping, and squirming, was keeping in step at the priest's side. After several blocks of this strange companionship the young priest looked dubiously at the native and ventured a grave: "Good morning."

"Good morning!" came back the stranger, drawing out the last syllable in a high metallic note. He repeated the last syllable, "ning-ning-ning!" and as though entranced by its melody he abruptly rhymed it, "ring-ring-ring; sing-sing-sing; ting-ting-ting." A group began to gather. At that

moment another black-gowned figure approached and took hold of the priest's arm.

"American?" he queried.

"Yes," was the answer with evident relief at the sight of reinforcements.

"Follow me — close, Father. We'll get rid of that innocent you picked up."

Shouldering their way through the crowd, the two priests disappeared into a *tienda* (store). Hard on their heels came the native, still loudly chanting his rhymes. The *tienda* was a mix-up affair of Japanese notions and Chinese toys, bright-colored cloths and gaudy glassware. In a flash the rhymester's attention was caught by a huge multicolored kite. With inarticulate cries he ran over to the counter where it was displayed.

"Quick," said the rescuing priest. Seizing his companion's arm he directed him out a side door into the street. A wave of the hand brought up a *calesa*, a two-wheeled gig. "Tumble in," he ordered. As they arranged their lengthy limbs about the diminutive vehicle, the horse started off at a brisk trot.

"Well, I guess we shook that loco lad," said the strange priest. "Now are you going any place in particular, Father?"

"Yes, I was trying to find my way to San Carlos Seminary."

"Well, that's quite a coincidence. That's where I live."

He called out to the driver. "Seminario de San Carlos!" Turning back to his companion and extending his hand, "We belong to different regiments but we fight on the same front line. Harrison is my name."

"Not Fred Harrison by any means?"

"No less."

"Well, I'm glad to meet you. My name's Edward Courtney. I have a letter to you from Father Mat Toohey. That's why I was on my way to San Carlos Seminary."

"Say, this is something! Father Mat, eh? Many's the cigarette we smoked together in the boiler room during our seminary days. Where is he hiding now?"

"He's first assistant at St. Philomena's church, Brooklyn. I met him there and he told me about you. I . . ."

Something seemed to hit the tin top of the vehicle a resounding crack.

"What was that?" asked Father Courtney.

"Only the driver hitting the top of the *calesa* with his whip. He wants the horse to step a little faster."

"Oh," Father Courtney said as he sat back again . . . "You know, I am not yet orientated. Everything is so strange and new. I was soaking it all up when that balmy fellow tied up with me."

"Nothing dangerous about him, just a simpleton."

They both laughed.

"By the way, just when did your boat dock?"

"Two days ago," replied Father Courtney.

"Two days? Takes you a long time to look up friends."

"I've been getting my tropical outfit, white cassocks, sun helmet, and the rest. I was on your trail today because I need a pilot."

"We've got a car at the seminary. How long will you be in Manila?"

"Three days."

"Well, you have a date to see the city with me during that time. Where are you going after that?"

"I am to receive my appointment tomorrow. It will probably be for the Alva Province."

"Well, take it easy. Don't look for hardships. You will have enough dumped in your lap."

The *calesa* rounded a corner and began pattering its way up a cool, palm-lined walk.

"This is the seminary," Father Harrison said. "The concrete building with the verandas all around is the main building. That is where your humble servant inducts the youthful minds of the Philippines into the mysteries of English as it is spoken, apologetics as it is argued, and algebra as it is addled."

A few minutes later Father Harrison had his visitor in a cool, airy room and was introducing him to a *mañana* chair.

"It's practically a bed," protested the newcomer. "It would be a devastating thing in which to make one's morning meditation."

"Here is something you will not find up in that province where you are going," Father Harrison said, as he switched on an electric fan.

"I'll have to be ready for heat, then," remarked Father Courtney quietly.

"And plenty of it."

At that moment the door swung open and a stout, short figure clad in a frumpy white drill cassock entered the room. Father Harrison jumped to his feet. "Father Mulligan!" he exclaimed.

"Yeah, yeah," said the newcomer wagging a stubby finger. "I heard the bellows blowing as I passed your door. I came in to find out the reason for this lapse in the regulations."

"Father Mulligan is our Oratory professor and dean of the philosophers."

The two shook hands. Father Mulligan's eye ran slowly over the young priest from head to toe: "You're made for the tropics, young man. You're tall and rangy with not too much adipose tissue to worry about. But I . . ." He slid both his chubby hands over the bulge at his waistline, rolled his eyes heavenward, and subsided into an easy chair.

To Father Courtney's inquiring eye, the two missionaries offered quite a contrast. Father Harrison's face was sharp, incisive, with a pair of agate gray eyes that could light up readily with friendliness. Well proportioned and of medium height, he was a man in good physical condition. Father Mulligan, on the contrary, was a formless mass of bulging contours that flowed all over his chair. Two facts about Father Mulligan soon obtruded themselves on the newcomer's attention — one was that the stubby little cleric seemed liable

to melt away in perspiration, the other was that the seemingly worried look that clung about his chubby bulb of a nose and his thick-jowled cheeks was no safe indication of his character; that stout body housed a deep resource of wisdom, wit, apostolic zeal, and sheer boyishness.

"Fred," said he, "I'm feverish today. . . ."

"Oh-oh!" smiled Father Harrison, rising. "I'll see to the medicine. He's ordering a drink in honor of your arrival, Father. What do you drink, Padre?"

"Anything cold!"

Father Harrison disappeared.

"He's after the room boy," confided Father Mulligan, drawing a crumpled pack of cigarettes from his pocket. "Boy's name is Meleton. Rhymes with skeleton. Fine boy. Gentle, lovable, and acutely discerning. He asked me this morning if I was Father Harrison's brother? I weigh 220 pounds in my bare feet, and Harrison has to go on a diet of pudding and dumplings and steaks to make 150 pounds. Besides, look at this nose of mine. Then look at his. And the boy asks me if I am Fred's brother! I glare at him, 'You little scamp, what makes you ask that?' 'Because you are like him,' he replies, 'You are kind, Father,' . . . so, you see, my virtues always find me out; ahem!"

Followed by Father Harrison, a boy slipped his way into the room, with a tray full of bottles and glasses.

"Meleton," said Father Harrison with a wave of his hand toward the boy. "Come here, and meet Father Courtney, a padre Americano."

The boy set down the tray. Taking the visitor's hand, he kissed it. Quickly he went back to the tray and began to serve the drinks.

"Courtney," said Father Mulligan, "isn't it a lovely land we have here — 7000 emeralds — and very few earthquakes?"

"Well," replied the young priest, "I haven't been around much yet. From what I have seen, I fancy there is not going to be any lack of sunshine to make me homesick."

"You will get homesick from having it all the year round," said Father Harrison emphatically.

"Uh-uh," grunted Father Mulligan affirmatively. "Mother Nature here in the Islands spreads another kind of lap for her children to rest in. It's more verdantly beautiful and more enervatingly soft than the cold, rough climes of our northern countries. . . ." He cut the oratorical period and peered at Father Courtney. "Ever read Wolkenkraut?"

The visitor denied all knowledge of the man.

"Anthropologist," Father Mulligan elucidated. "Says that the children of a land take on the characteristics of its clime. Swell thing to remember no matter what people you are dealing with."

Father Harrison chuckled. "There are plenty of habits here that differ from our United States's way of doing things. You will pick them up, Father Edward, as you go along."

"I met one of them yesterday," replied the young priest. "I tried to call our houseboy and he wouldn't come. . . ."

"Because you wigwagged the wrong way," interposed Father Mulligan. "A beckoning gesture means 'go away,' and a 'get-thee-hence' wave of the hand means 'come hither.' Look, I'll show you," and he wagged a set of five pudgy fingers in demonstration. "Crazy, isn't it? You want to call somebody? Listen," the fat priest cast his mouth into a terrific gash and let out a hiss that sounded like a broken steam boiler. "You know the sign of approbation or admiration? No? Well, I heard it the very first time I gave a speech. I finished polishing off a gargantuan period in my usual graceful style and paused for breath, when a loud clucking arose. I thought the eggs would follow. They didn't. It was applause I was getting, not eggs! If you put up a house out here they start on the roof, they ride on the left side of the street, they count their tally by beginning at the end of the hand, the small finger, not the index. In fact, I have sometimes thought that the easiest way for me to get things straight would be for me to stand on my head."

A bell sounded.

"Visit. The usual five minutes and then luncheon," announced Father Harrison as he rose. Father Courtney stood up. "Father Mulligan?"

"Ah, yes! Mealtime. A necessary evil — three times per day." Grunting ponderously, the stout priest heaved himself out of the chair.

The two priests conducted their guest down a long, broad corridor. Through an open window Edward glimpsed a small patio neatly bordered with tropical shrubs and bushes. The chapel was restfully cool. The windows, made up of small latticework squares and fitted with thin translucent shells, shut out the heat and tempered the sun's glare. Edward dropped his head into his hands, and let his thoughts rise in prayer. He prayed in thankfulness, for he was glad to be here. Glad that he had rejected the offer of a professorial chair in the seminary at home — glad now, though the very memory of it continued to hurt him, of the pain of that last good-by to his mother, his home, his native country. The hope rose in his heart that he might prove worthy to follow in the footsteps of those giants who had gone before — Paul of Tarsus, Xavier of the lame foot, Perboyre, Damien, and the thousands of others. And the thoughts changed into words. He began to address the Master Missioner.

"Oh! My beloved Saviour, make me strong. I know that I am weak, and my Way of the Cross begins. I must speak of it to no one but You. I lay this burden on myself. My reparation is for You alone to witness. I am tempted to consider myself a hero for this sacrifice that I have made. Please, dear Jesus, keep me steadfast. I am unable to face this life alone. I shall want to talk to others, to look for sympathy from other human beings. Give me the grace to make You my model in all things. And I ask you also, Mother Mary . . ."

A hand tapped him on the shoulder. "Come on, old man," Father Harrison whispered. "Time for luncheon."

Chapter 2

It was late evening. The moon was rising above Manila. The warm streets were still turgid with traffic when Edward Courtney let himself into his temporary home at the Procure. In the dark hall he recalled that his new friend, Father Harrison, was to call for him at nine o'clock in the morning.

The Procure was a large concrete building with a spacious veranda running around the entire second story. The house was very quiet. Carefully he entered his room and prepared for bed. Letting down his mosquito net, he tucked in its edges. Then he knelt, said a brief prayer to our Blessed Mother, disrobed, and donned the pajamas that he had laid out on a chair earlier in the day, and crawled under the mosquito net.

He could not sleep. The street noises were strange: the dinging of a passing *calesa's* bell, the clopping of the horse's feet, the slipslopping of a native's wooden heels, the monotonous beat of slippers on the pavement, the occasional sound of voices raised in the strange nuances of Tagalog. He reminded himself that he was a New Yorker, used to the noise of a city at night. He tossed, he turned, he itched, he scratched. Finally, persistent thought grew from suspicion to certitude. The bed was inhabited! He reached out a hand and grasped his flashlight. Sitting up he turned the beam of light on his pillow. There they were — ants!

Quick as thought, he pushed his head out from the net and

inspected the legs of the bed; they were all firmly set in the tin cans filled with kerosine — so it could not be by that route that the invaders were entering. A particularly urgent itch caused him to put his hand inside the front of his pajamas — with a wild leap he was out of bed and into the bathroom. In a moment he was beneath the shower, letting the cool streams of water deluge away the throngs of insects swarming all over him. A colony of them had invaded his pajamas during the daytime.

“Shucks!” he muttered, getting out from under the shower, “Father Mulligan told me today that whenever I pick up an article of clothing I should give it a shake.”

A half-hour search of the bed disposed of any remaining ants. Clad in a pair of pajamas that had been duly inspected and approved, he crawled back into bed. All sounds of street life had died away. The night grew hot, pulseless. In vain he tried to sleep. Rising from bed, he shot his feet into his slippers and went out to the veranda on the north side of the house. Far up the street a group of gallants were lightly and melodiously strumming their guitars. It was a tenuous thread of sound, now gay and lilting, now falling away to the pleading of a minor key. The music seemed to fit his mood. Planting both elbows on the veranda’s railing he listened to the plaintive melody that drifted down on the heavy air.

The combination of the moon, the peace of night, and the sound of sweet music does various things to various people. To a newly arrived missionary on a darkened veranda, 8000 miles from home, it does only one thing. His heart began to turn homeward. How different was everything here. The people, their way of dressing, of walking, of gesturing; what strange attitudes they struck, how outlandish their continuous jargon sounded in his ears; the ways of this city, its curious odors, its startling mixture of western and oriental conveyances, its hodgepodge of Chinese and Malay and Caucasian. Where did he fit in? What would he be able to

do for them? He felt homesick. He longed for his own. His head came down dejectedly on the pillow of his arms.

Suddenly the music stopped. After some while the sound of approaching footsteps came to his ears. Evidently the musicians would pass the Procure. It would never do for padre to be seen draped over the veranda in a pair of pajamas. He rose and retreated to a shadowed corner of the veranda. The nocturnal guitarists were now abreast of the building; one of them was dreamily humming the refrain of the song. The priest was stepping into deeper shadow when something thin and silky swished across his instep. A scraping sound — and then the night's stillness was shattered by the sound of splintering glass.

"Jesús, María, José!" howled a startled voice below and at once there was the sound of feet flying madly down the street.

A huge nightshirt loomed up from a doorway behind the priest. It was the Rector of the Procure, a big-boned, fearless Austrian. In his hand was clasped the first defensive weapon obtainable, a holy-water sprinkler.

"Father Courtney," he said, "Yah, what is happened?"

"Why, I — I really don't know, Father Rector," said the dumfounded priest. "I couldn't sleep. So I came out on the veranda. Some young men were passing below, and I walked over here in order to be out of sight from the street. Something caught my foot, and then there was the noise of breaking glass in the street."

"Potz Blitz!" the Rector ejaculated, "that is that Brother Eleazarius again. The man has things flying in his head. It is so ever since the war!"

"Why, he seems always quiet and devout. Did he throw something?"

"Nah, nah. It is a good brother, but there is owls upstairs since the war. All the times is he in the trenches again, and makes with threads these traps so that when the enemy soldiers come at night to attack, he steps on the thread and

pulls the bottle over — booms! And then he is awake. Good! Now two weeks ago something is stolen from here. Good! He will trap make and the thief catch. In the day I see not the thread. I walk here on the veranda and step on the thread — booms! A big bottle is tied to that thread and it falls the street down and by just bad luck in that street is a policeman and he is right under the spot almost where the bottle comes. I tell you, my friend, I have a bad day with the Filipino policeman. Always he comes back and say: 'But why do the Padre throw me a bottle in the back of the head?' "

The Rector wiped his face with the sleeve of his nightshirt.

"And now," he continued, "it is come again, at night. You stepped the string on, and *booms!* into the street down another bottle! If the policeman does not come, then I am a whole lot more than a little bit happy."

Edward could not keep from smiling. "I think you had better tell the Brother now what has happened; he may be getting out his army rifle and taking a shot at us."

"Yah, yah," agreed the other. "I tell him now, I tell him plenty. If he makes me another fire alarm with a bottle exploder, then he hangs that bottle on the ceiling over his head! Then he knows if it gives burglars and I can sleep, and he can tell me in the morning — after breakfast." With which ultimatum the indignant nightshirt billowed its way indoors. Edward, his homesickness forgotten, returned laughingly to his room and sought the shelter of the mosquito net again.

Tired though he was, he could not sleep. Lying on his back, he let the waves of thought roll over him. What vistas of work open up. Millions of Catholic souls, thousands of pagans, tens of thousands of schismatics — all in need of the priest. Christ's love embraced all races, all classes, the leper, the outcast as well as the ruler and His own. Can I then live a life of respectable ease, of comparative comfort among my own? I would be as He — an outcast for the outcasts, trying

to be all things to all men so as to gain all to Him. Lift me up, O Lord. No matter how hard the post given me in the field, I shall welcome the appointment. There will be people there who need me, and I have something to tell them.

At last there came the oblivion of sleep. But it was a troubled rest. Next morning his head was filled with a jumbled dream about rivers of people rushing into a bottomless chasm while he stood on the brink with outstretched arms to stop them, but they swept beneath his arms and he was powerless to save them. He celebrated Mass. After breakfast the houseboy summoned him; the Provincial wanted to see him. That could mean only one thing — his appointment. He hurried to the chapel. It was a brief visit, but he asked for a blessing on the ones whom he would care for. He knocked at the Father Provincial's door; an answer; he opened the door and entered. The white-haired Father smiled benignly. His words were few. Edward Courtney was outside again — dazed. "Teach in a seminary? . . ."

Chapter 3

THE few days in Manila fled all too swiftly. Father Harrison knew the capital city like the palm of his hand. Thus Edward had an opportunity to see the records of Spain's achievements and to hear an incisive commentary on the history of the Islands, interspersed with practical advice about the life that was awaiting him. The newcomer, frankly eager to learn, asked questions about the food, the living conditions, the way to deal with the natives. In those hours a friendship ripened between the two men. When Edward stood aboard the little interisland steamer that was to take him on the first lap of his journey northward, he gripped Father Harrison's hand very hard as he murmured his thanks.

"Nothing, Edward; not many Americans here, you know. We have to look out for each other. Now when you're up there in that Seminario de Espiritu Santo, you're in the provinces. You can't get what you want, nor when you want it. The mail is regular to your town. A card to me, and I'll take care of your needs."

"Thanks, Fred."

"Don't be the sort of fool that works too hard. The tropics are not the United States. Live missionaries are better than dead ones. And when your vacation time comes around. . . . I'll be waiting." The siren wailed. "So long, missionary, and cheerio!"

The schooner gave Edward his first taste of the cos-

mopolitan life aboard these interisland steamers. A broad-faced Filipina, baby in arms, came past him. In her mouth was a cigar stub and on her head reposed a good-sized bunch of bananas; she wore them as gracefully and effortlessly as though they were her own hair. All about him native men and women were making themselves at home by taking off their slippers and lifting their bare feet to the rails. Farther down the deck his eye spied a Filipino gentleman of the upper classes, dressed in immaculate white drill, a jaunty Panama hat on his head, a cigar between his lips, and a large-sized diamond ring on his finger. An urchin with his shoeshine box shrilled out his terms before the opulent-looking *illustrado*. Yes, the gentleman would have his shoes polished. Would the gentleman please take off his shoes? Why? The socks are white and he might get polish on them; besides, the boy can handle shoes better if he can put his one hand inside and turn the shoe about as he polishes. The gentleman leans over, unties his shoes, gives them to the boy and hangs his white-stockinged feet on the railing.

Edward soon began to search for his classmate, the diminutive Father Gene Barry, whose good fortune it had been to draw as his appointment a mission station in the province of Alva. Years of study together, years of virile piety and light-hearted play in each other's company had begotten a comradeship between these two young men. The aggressive, pug-nosed Gene was always a source of laughter to Edward; he had that rare trick of digging up some whimsical Latin line to cover any unusual happening. Edward walked toward the stern of the boat, working his way through family impedimenta, heaped up stalks of bananas, caged livestock, baskets of mangoes, scores of coconuts, and playful children before he located his friend holding down two chairs for them. Sweat drops beaded Father Barry's snub nose in a comical corona.

"Ed, if you have asthma you are going to get a quick cure."

"Why?" queried the other stretching out in his chair.

"Because we are right over the engine-room hatch. Turn your head and inhale the gasoline fumes."

"Hot oil! And something else! Can't we get out of here, Gene?"

"Try it. You'd either have to dispossess a family or go over the side."

"Well," replied Edward, "we will have to stay here. We may as well practice the virtue of resignation." He stretched out more comfortably.

The boat carried them past islands that looked like dream pictures. Luzon, the largest island of the Philippine group, they kept on their right. They looked long at its rugged coast line of sloping mountains with white clouds sleeping in their hollows. Sunlight poured down on the mountain crests, and the blue waters of the sea rolled in to break in snowy combers on the cliffs. Far out on the horizon tiny ships and phantom sails appeared, only to vanish again like vague specters of mist.

An hour or so later the boat bumped clumsily against a dilapidated pier. A stalwart khaki-clad figure began to throw things over the side of the boat onto the dock.

"Say, that fellow is an American," observed Gene Barry.

"He has a Filipino wife," added his companion.

"Look at the family," Gene whispered.

A quartet of children of varying ages, shades, and hues, scampered ashore. The American gathered up one small child in his arms, took hold of another saffron-complexioned boy by the hand, and strode ahead. His native wife, with a bundle on her head, and the two remaining children likewise balancing burdens on their heads, brought up the rear.

"Didn't seem put out any, did he?" Gene commented.

"No; I suppose they don't think the same about those things as at home."

"We will probably have to change a lot of our own ways of thinking, Ed."

The boat's siren squawked. Rapidly the ship backed and

then began to swing out into the bay in a wide arc. The arc grew until a complete circle had been described and the boat headed back again for the shore.

Father Barry went to talk with one of the ship's crew. In a moment he returned with the explanation of the strange maneuver.

"A passenger whose ticket calls for Santa Cruz, our port of call, just decided he will spend the night in this town. So he told the captain as we were leaving. . . ."

Edward lifted his sun helmet with both hands. "What about their schedule? Or do they figure this accommodation for every passenger?"

"I can't say; but if they do we will need a lot of that resignation, eh, Americano?"

At that moment a loud voice was heard above the normal noises of the ship. A woman was holding forth in a raucous voice to two Filipina girls. Barelegged and clad in a revealing gown, she possessed a face which would have been a plastic surgeon's delight.

"I believe in dream," declared the lady to her listening Filipino friends. "One night I dream a big fire . . . and it happen."

The Filipinas nodded and kept diligently smoking their cigarettes.

"I believe in dream," she persisted. "Maybe it's right, maybe it's no." A wave of her cigarette. "But what I think is this. If I don't go, maybe bad luck. Maybe don't get all my money. Because I get great money now. I believe in dream. Yes."

"I wish she'd dream she had acute laryngitis and that it would come true," said Gene bitterly.

"That's not charitable, Gene."

"No, neither is it of her to keep up her chatter. Where's she going anyhow?"

"To the Naval Station. I heard her say that she was inheriting some money. . . ."

"I dreamed at four o'glawk this morning," went on the lady and all the boat could hear, "I dream somebody is die. I ain't got no more Faddaire, no Moddaire. My husban' is die. I dream and I don' wan my son or my daughter to die. I don' know what to do!"

"Everybody got to die," said one of the Filipinas simply.

The chatter of the woman subsided. How fatalistic the natives were. But it wasn't a blind surrender to fate. Fred Harrison had made that clear. Three hundred years of Christian influence had given them a deep sense of God's Divine Providence. God was for them a benignant, all-knowing Father. What God did was right. Suffering, hardships, birth, and death came. Everyone had his share of these things. It was all right. Their Father in heaven apportioned them. He gave them plenty of good things too. Food, sunlight, sunlight that danced and shimmered on the blue waters, shimmering, shimmering. . . . Edward fell into a doze.

A blast of the ship's siren shattered his sleep. It was evening, and the boat was pacing calmly into a large bay.

"It does me good to hear that siren," said a sour voice at his side.

"Oh-oh, what's the matter, Gene — were you sleeping?"

"No, I wasn't. I was listening for hours to the dream theories of that French adventuress over there. She ought to be psychoanalyzed. That siren is the only thing that can choke off her chatter . . . and it had a man-sized job of it."

Edward laughed. "Well, we are coming into Santa Cruz, aren't we? That should remove the millstone from around your neck."

The boat nosed its way into a wide-armed bay with mountains sweeping completely around it. A clump of coconut palms marked the ship's destination. As the boat drifted slowly in, the sun worked a miracle of color change on a huge cumulus of cloud that hung immobile above the mountains. The fluff of white changed to pink, to blazing red, and then began to fade into the soft hue of a rose.

A medley of cries and general confusion recalled Edward from his reverie. The boat had stopped. The pier was a makeshift platform of wood protruding into the water on unstable tree trunks.

"It looks like we have to do a tight-rope act to get on terra firma," said Gene.

"What's that to a good swimmer?" encouraged the other.

"There's the satchels and my clothes, you know," he replied.

"Well, onward Christian soldiers!" Seizing his satchels, Edward crossed the plank that connected the ship to the pier, his companion at his heels. On shore they were greeted by the welcoming arms of a ruddy-faced cleric, Father Gallagher.

"The ducklings from Americal!" he shouted.

"Dry ones, too, God be praised," Gene Barry shouted back.

"I got Fred Harrison's letter telling me of your coming, so I drew up a schedule for you. You have a regular itinerary now for your trip north. I sent messages on ahead to the different stations. The priests at the various places should be waiting for you. We have to do that, you know, because these missionaries are the greatest fly-by-nights on God's earth. I ought to know. I am one myself."

While talking he had led them to the town's main street. A few ramshackle stores, roofed with *nipa*, had signs hanging out. In front of them lounged rough-clad natives, evidently fishermen, frankly curious about the new padres. A few of them gave their pastor a quiet greeting. Dust lay thick on the roadway. Mongrel dogs slumbered in shaded spots. Carabao and oxen dung littered the path on all sides. A ten-minute walk brought them in sight of the church.

"You have a pretty nice church, Father Gallagher," said Edward. "Concrete, isn't it?"

"Concrete it is. Nice enough, compared to what the other stations have. Come closer. See that?" He pointed to a foundation of ancient stone on which the concrete edifice rested. "That old stone is the ruin of the former church razed by the

revolutionists. When we came, that's what we had to start with."

"You built on another man's foundations, eh?" Gene Barry said.

"Yes, we are not like St. Paul in that respect."

"The insurrection against Spain and then the trouble with the United States must have been rather bad in this province," Edward remarked.

"Decidedly. But pick up your stuff and come into the rectory where we can talk at ease."

A stone wall encircled a square of ground adjoining the church. Opening a latched gate their host swung it wide, disclosing a tin-roofed, bamboo-wattled maisonette with a diminutive porch in front of it. "The palace," he declared with a grandiose gesture of his hand.

"Say, what's this big hole in the wall, Father?" asked Gene, pointing to a gap alongside the gate. "You could throw a dead cat through it."

"My most cherished heirloom," rejoined the ruddy-faced host. "A cannon ball went through there. I don't know if any Insurrectos were on the receiving end of it. If they were, it certainly solved all their independence problems."

"Permanently," smiled Edward.

"You must excuse my accommodations and the state of the house. My houseboy ran off a couple of days ago to get married. He cooks as badly as I do, so in that respect you are getting a break."

"We won't mind that in the least," Edward assured him.

"We're in the army now," Gene chimed in.

"That's the spirit," agreed their host. "Now peel off your cassocks and wash up in there. I'll start wrestling with a frying pan."

Edward found the so-called washroom to be a starkly primitive arrangement: a floor of bamboo strips with ample space between each strip. In a corner stood two Socony five-gallon cans, filled with water. His vision of a cooling shower

vanished. Taking a towel from his satchel, he soaked it in the water and sponged himself.

"How did you make out, Gene?" he asked his companion as the two were dressing.

"First rate. I managed to get one can of water on top of the other. Then I lay flat on the floor and tilted it over me."

"Come and get it!" called out the invisible cook.

"Where are you?" Edward called back.

"This way. . . ."

The visitors entered a low lean-to that had been built on one side of the rectory. The bare wooden table with its kerosine lamp was set for three places.

"Don't ask what the grub is," said the perspiring cook. "It's fish, rice, tomatoes, and fried bananas. The fried bananas are in honor of the guests, also that tin of butter and this tin of cheese. . . ."

The rice was boiled and lumped together; the fish was fried tight and hard; the tomatoes were shrunken; the butter and cheese smelt strongly of their tin containers and the few *pan de sal* (rolls) were the product of the village's Chinese baker who obviously knew how to combine a measure of flour with two of chalk dust. Yet the guests ate with gusto. The trip had given them an appetite.

After the meal they helped their host carry the few dishes back to what he called the kitchen.

"Dump them all there, in that basket," he said. "There will be some of the kids around for catechism class tomorrow. They can wash them."

"What's this?" asked Gene Barry, standing over a wooden box with a layer of ashes in it and three blackened stones.

"That," replied Father Gallagher, "is my stove."

"How do you bake?"

"We don't. Out here we live simply. Boiled rice and fried fish are the usual diet. Now and then," he added with a twinkle in his eye, "we change off to fried fish and boiled rice."

"Don't you get sick?" queried Edward solicitously.

"Sure, plenty," assented Father Gallagher heartily (it evidently did not bother him much). "Come out on the porch."

On the porch the three priests tilted their chairs back against the wall of the house.

"Beautiful moon coming up, isn't it?" Father Gallagher said.

"What's that low slapping noise?" asked Gene Barry. "Is there a river around here?"

"No," replied Father Gallagher. "That's the *estero* behind the church, a small canal that connects up with the bay. When the tide comes in, it overflows. There's plenty of salt water in my back yard then!" He pointed the stem of his pipe at the church. "What do you think of that bell tower of mine?"

"It's a good size," replied Edward.

"The first Sunday I was here I discovered that the bell ropes were rotted away. I had to clamber and crawl all the way up to the top of it, a hammer in my belt, and pound on the bells to tell my flock that their new pastor had arrived and there would be Sunday Mass."

"Had to do your own advertising," Gene Barry remarked.

"Yes, and with a hammer," grinned the genial host. "Well," he reminisced, "we've come quite a way since then. The church is in fairly good shape. More than can be said of most of the churches you will meet along the line."

"Fred Harrison told me that we would find some grand old Spanish churches in this province," Edward remarked.

"Hum," said the older missionary. "Grand old Spanish churches — well, yes, outwardly almost all of them present a pretty good appearance. Nothing modernistic, you realize. The old Spanish missionaries built for eternity. Those old churches of theirs have stood the wear and tear of time, of tornado and earthquake. Inwardly, however, many of them are enough to make the angels weep. Fixings and furnishings

all pilfered or moldered away, the roof no protection from the rains, the rafters a roosting place for legions of bats; and dirt, mold, and dank odors everywhere."

"Well, why don't the men clean them up?" Gene demanded.

"Hum! Yes; why don't they? Well, for one thing, after you are here a few years you don't notice these things much any more. One grows inured to dust, dirt, cobwebs, insects, and the like. Perhaps it is a heaven-sent blessing for us that we do. Something would crack if we were to keep straining to have things on the same plane as at home."

"But decay and leaking roofs — why, it means the loss eventually of the whole building," insisted Edward.

"Correct. But repairs require money, Father, and that is a thing we don't have. I'll not go into that. You're going to hear it at every rectory. You saw our supper tonight? Well, that's my daily fare — minus the cheese and butter. If I could afford it, I'd eat better. I'd fix my church up a bit. The work is hard, and none of us stays healthy or useful very long if our food is not solid and varied."

The priest branched out into his problems and his plans for his little village. The two listeners were absorbed by his recital. Futile and vain as it would seem at first blush for a man to be accepting such an insignificant straggle of huts as a lifework, yet the missionary's words were vital. His talk touched every aspect of life in the village, life in all its phases, both evil and good. The two young men knew they were to follow in his footsteps.

Finally Father Gallagher rose to his feet. "Have to put your toes under the mosquito net now, Fathers. You have plenty of traveling to do tomorrow. If the bus doesn't get you down, the heat will."

The three entered the house. Their host unrolled a mat on the kitchen floor and established himself thereon, the two Filipino beds he turned over to them. While they were still protesting he fell soundly asleep.

"Evidently, he has done this before," remarked Edward.
 "Let's turn in!"

In a corner of the adjacent room he found the bed assigned to him. It was a diminutive thing, a taut piece of wickerwork taking the place of a mattress. He tested it with his hand; it was stretched as tight as the skin of a drum. One Filipino blanket reposed at the foot of the bed and a capoc-stuffed pillow at the head. After crawling under the net he attempted to roll up in the blanket, only to discover that the standards of weights, measures, and lengths are a bit different in the Far East, for the blanket served him more in the nature of a necktie than a body covering.

At two o'clock in the morning he awoke to discover that his back was tattooed with the crisscross markings of the wickerwork mattress. "Like sleeping on a waffle iron," he observed uncomfortably. His hair was drenched with the damps of the morning dew, and his feet felt like two cantaloupes on ice. Getting stiffly out of bed, he walked to the veranda. Over the line of the palms the sky was fairly swimming with stars. He felt lonely and tired. Perhaps a prayer would make him feel better. Resolutely he went back to his room and knelt down beside the rattan-stringed mattress. In a mood of bitter loneliness, he lifted his heart in prayer.

"O Heart of Christ, change my heart.

O wounded Christ, help me to bear my part.

O blood-clotted King, stamp my soul with thorns
 and cuts.

O Love, O Love, drown me deep in Your tideless
 tides;

Fix my lips to your spear-split side.

Sweet, dear Jesus, do not hide, ever, Your eyes from
 me.

Light my way with the lamps of red, the ruby drops
 from

Your thorn-crowned Head, so that mine eyes may
 see. . . ."

Chapter 4

AFTER an early Mass, Father Gallagher was waiting with breakfast for the two missionaries.

"Sleep well?" he asked, ladling out some oatmeal.

"First class," Gene Barry replied.

"How about you, Father Courtney?"

"Well, fairly well for the first part of the night, then that rattan framework began to work though my skin. . . ."

"Oh, glory be to St. Patrick!" ejaculated Father Gallagher, setting down the pot of oatmeal, "I forgot to spread the mat for you."

"Wasn't that a mat I slept on?"

"No; the mat goes on top of what you slept on. Here. . . ." He left the room and returned with a rolled-up mat in his hand. "This is a mat. It's made of finely woven grass. Did you actually sleep on that rattan frame?"

"I tried," smiled Edward, "but I learned." He placed a spoonful of oatmeal into his mouth. There was a moment's silence and then he looked across at Gene for confirmation. He received a huge grimace. Father Gallagher intercepted the byplay and grinned good-naturedly.

"Salt!" chorused the two visitors.

The reverend cook mouthed a spoonful of the oatmeal, held it on his tongue a while, and then delivered judgment. "It has the taste of fried newspaper, now that you both mention it. But then, you know, we missionaries eat much worse

things," and nothing abashed, he proceeded with the oatmeal.

As they were completing their meal, a Ford bus of ancient vintage jolted up to the door. The two young missionaries hastened to snatch up their satchels and obtain a place on the ramshackle seats. Their host went with them and saw them bestowed comfortably. They shook hands.

"I'll be back, Father," Edward promised. "Just as soon as you can find your salt shaker."

Father Gallagher laughed heartily. "Bring your own mat the next time you come," he countered.

They waved at him as long as they could see him . . . a lone figure standing in the very dusty road. The bus swung north, then west, then south, and then east! It described a complete circle; and there, sure enough, was Father Gallagher standing in the roadway where they had left him. The bus came to a shaking stop.

"Say," yelled Gene Barry as he leaned out of the bus, "what kind of Halloween party is this? I thought we just left you?"

"You did," chuckled the ruddy-faced priest. "But you see, I am back again."

"Why did the bus return?" asked Edward. "Did they forget the springs?"

"No; although it may feel like it the longer you ride. They haven't got enough passengers yet. So he ran around the town trying to gather in a few more customers. He'll do that three or four times until the bus is full."

"Oh, so that's why he shouted and tooted his horn all the time," said Gene Barry.

Three times they made the circuit of the town, picking up passengers here and there. At last the bus seemed to have found the provincial highway. With sighings and creakings innumerable, it rambled along to Villa Real.

"Ed," said Gene apprehensively, "listen to the knock in that engine. We are going to have a corpse on our hands

very soon, but I hope it doesn't die before we get to Villa Real."

A half-hour later Gene's hopes were blasted. In the center of a long stretch of verdant rice fields, the engine wheezed despairingly and suddenly expired. There being no trees in the vicinity, the passengers just sat in the seats. The sun was beating down on the bus's tin-covered sides. Armed with a wrench the driver lifted the hood. Passengers inquired solicitously. No, it was not running. It could be fixed. But it was difficult. Two hours passed in aimless, heatful sitting. From the rear there finally came into sight a bus going in their direction. A passenger removed his shirt, stood out in the roadway and flagged the oncoming bus. It ground to a halt in clouds of dust.

A black-gowned figure seated alongside of the driver caught the attention of the two stranded priests. They hastened over to him. Removing a pair of black sunglasses, he dropped from the bus, and met them, hand extended; "Fathers Courtney and Barry?"

"The same," agreed Father Barry.

"I am Father Schmitt from Villa Real. I just got notice last night that you were visiting my station today. I took the first bus I could."

"Our bus broke down, Father."

"That's quite common. Take your satchels and jump up alongside me."

In a few minutes the missionaries resumed their journey to Villa Real. Father Schmitt explained that he had gone down to the Naval base to see an American doctor. His pale face bore out the necessity of such a trip. As the bus clattered past carabao wallows and through slumberous villages shaded by towering *buri* and coconut palms, he outlined the history of his station. The revolution had left it a heap of ruins. The populace had gone over en masse to Aglipayanism, a schism which had broken out during the revolution of the Philippines against Spain. Aglipay, the leader of the move-

ment for an independent church, was an apostate priest. The schism was named after him. Only two families had remained Catholic. Years of prayer and work, years of patient endurance of contumely had finally resulted in the building of a small church and a rectory. Drawing the fallen ones back to the Church was a slow and arduous task. The Aglipayans had become bound up with politics, and a return to the faith of their fathers was difficult without material hardships and financial reverses in the transition. But he was succeeding, slowly but surely. Moreover, back in the hills he had the Negritoes, a group of nomadic primitives, difficult to reach. He gave them all the time he could spare and had a few converts among them.

The interest, the questions, the sympathetic attention of the two priests acted as a stimulant on the veteran missionary. From a few explanatory remarks he roused to discourse at length on the hardships, the setbacks, the persecutions he had faced. In simple words he told of the success gained. Eventually the bus came to a halt beneath a huge acacia tree. To the right of it stretched a large flat of grass, the town plaza; at its further end a small frame church flanked by a plain one-story building faced them. Father Schmitt alighted and pointing proudly to the buildings exclaimed: "Ten years' work!" A boy hurried up to them, kissed the hand of each priest, and commandeered their satchels.

When the dust and perspiration from their trip had been removed by a wash, the missionaries sat down to a well-prepared table.

"Why, Father," expostulated Edward, "you must have robbed the entire countryside for all this fare!"

"No, no," their host explained. "As soon as I heard yesterday that you were coming, I sent a message by the very next bus to some ladies here. They have been working all morning for you. Visitors are like Christmas for me, an annual event, so I have to treat them as well as I can. Maybe they will come again," he added a trifle wistfully.

"Well, if you do me up as fine as this, Father," stated Gene, attacking the fried chicken, "I'll be back in a few days."

"Try some of this," said their host, indicating a plate of crisply done meat. "It's the favorite dish in the Islands, the fiesta dish, *lechon*, roasted pig."

"But you're not eating anything yourself," protested Edward, observing how their host hung back.

"Well, the fact is, Father," he said apologetically, "I can't do much with the knife and fork. My stomach is ruined. For the past two years I've eaten only two meals a day."

"Two meals a day?" whispered Father Barry in awe. He stuffed a piece of roasted pork into his mouth.

"The doctor wanted me to stay on a diet. Since the main item was milk I was hard put to it. We have no milk-giving cows. I can't drink the canned milk. I drink boiled carabao milk and eat some corn flakes."

"Holy mackerell!" Gene grunted under his breath. "Carabao milk and corn flakes . . . water-buffalo cream and elephant dandruff!"

The houseboy entered carrying a bowl of thin bluish white liquid and a box of corn flakes.

"My rations," grinned their pale-faced host a trifle apologetically.

"Say, Father," Edward interjected, "could I have a glass of that milk?"

"Certainly. There is plenty," assented the missionary, evidently glad to see that his visitors didn't think him entirely odd.

The milk was brought. Edward drank it slowly before the stricken gaze of his traveling companion, who had sat cheek by jowl with Edward in the refectory at home and knew what a delicate chooser the New Yorker was in the matter of viands.

The houseboy re-entered with a summons for Father Schmitt. A matrimonial case. He excused himself.

"Ed," whispered Gene Barry, "how did you do it?"

"By swallowing."

"You'll be sick, Ed."

"The future tense is wrong," was the quiet retort. "I am sick. Every gulp of that stuff and I could see a carabao slushing in mud. Ugh!"

The boy came in with a pot of coffee. Two hasty cups of the hot liquid steadied Edward's stomach.

"What did you do it for?" persisted Gene as soon as the boy had made his exit.

"To make the poor fellow feel good. Couldn't you see that he was self-conscious about that food he had to down? Just like a prize monkey in a zoo. What made it worse was his evident realization that we must be imagining him a sort of half-baked idiot or a backwoods faddist."

"I didn't notice his reactions, of course," said Gene, "I was busy eating," and he reflectively unloaded some native candies on his plate.

Their host returned and the meal was soon finished. In spite of protests he herded them off to bed for a siesta. "If you want to work here any length of time you must learn when to relax," he declared. "It's necessary."

The bus that was to carry them to their next stop, Pulupándan, was due at four o'clock. The houseboy carried their grips to the acacia tree and the three priests followed. For an hour they chatted in the tree's shade. Then with the wisdom of long experience, Father Schmitt left the boy to guard the satchels and herded his visitors back to the rectory.

"This is *mañana* land, Fathers," he told them. "They don't do things here as in the Occident. If there is a delay you must learn to wait, patiently. The sun will make you hot enough without you helping it by getting excited."

"I guess that is going to take some learning on my part," said Gene. "I never did claim any relationship to holy Job."

"Well, you learn patience by being patient," smiled the host. "This will be lesson one."

He gestured toward some *mañana* chairs. Obediently Gene

Barry spread-eagled himself in the nearest one and composed himself for slumber. Pleading some unfinished breviary, Edward went off to the quiet of the chapel.

Three hours later, at eight p.m., the bus hove into sight.

Chapter 5

STALE with strange smells, the bus swooped out of Villa Real. At the driver's elbow an old, wrinkled, and toothless Hecate was perched. She screamed and gesticulated at him and he laughed back recklessly at her. Becoming more vehement, she leaned over the wheel, obscuring his view of the road. The vehicle rocketed from side to side. He continued to shout back at her and urged the car on to greater speed.

It was utterly impossible to talk. They bucketed about like peas in a pail. Finally Edward, unable to stand the suspense, began to address a remark to his companion. His mouth filled with several moths. He spluttered and spat out the intruders. Gene Barry pointed to the windshield. The driver had swung it up. It was a giant funnel for all creeping and flying things that were abroad that night. Passing through a slumbering hamlet, the bus ran over a pig that had been sleeping in the roadway. As its rear wheel went over the squealing beast's back, the vehicle slewed dangerously. Then amidst the old woman's frenzied cackling, it miraculously righted itself. Intuition prompted Edward to shout a warning to his companion. As they flung themselves to the floor, a rock hit the outside of the bus with a crack like a cannon; hard on its heels a missile, whizzing through the bus right where Father Barry's head had been, hit the support where Edward was crouching.

Not by the beat of one cylinder did the bus halt its stride.

Slowly the missionaries rose from their recumbent positions and regained their seats. Soon the careening bus seemed to sober up and steady itself to a halt.

"Pulupándan!" cackled the crone over her shoulder.

The two missionaries hurried out of the bus as though it were the fiery furnace heated seven times seventy. Seemingly impelled by the same thought, they first shook hands with each other and spent a minute or two enjoying the sensation of being alive. Behind them stretched a large common — the town plaza. They were standing before a tall, stone wall.

Inside the walled enclosure a church with a massive tower jutted up into the moonlight. Father Barry looked at his watch. The luminous dial showed eleven o'clock. No one seemed to be stirring inside the enclosure. The wall was solid masonry, running completely around the church. Its exterior was moldy and dank-smelling. They finally found a locked gate. Raising their voices they shouted. Not a vibration of protest nor a word of welcome disturbed the night's silence.

"Father Pedro has not waited up for us," finally decided Edward. "Maybe Gallagher's message miscarried."

"Well," replied Gene slowly, "applying the principles, as we say in moral theology, we have here a *requisitum*, a need; to wit, a place to house our weary limbs this night. Since necessity knows no law, and since we all belong to one big family, this being a Catholic Church, why the Church will make provision!"

"And, moreover, since no one is looking and *lex dubia nulla*, I'll boost you up over the wall," added Edward. Father Barry was heaved to the top of the wall. There he scrambled into a sitting position, his white shirttail standing out startlingly in the moonlight.

"Well, it's either in or out," came back the cryptic reply, and he disappeared. Presently there came the sound of stone on metal. The gate swung open. Edward picked up their satchels and walked in.

"A funny way to visit people," said Gene Barry shaking his head, "I knocked that lock all to smithereens."

"That will take explaining," Edward agreed. "Why did you do it?"

"Why say! After I dropped down into this garden with its twelve feet high palisades, how was I to get up and over it again? You were on the other side . . . and I think you told me to open it."

"Hum! Well, I hope this isn't an Aglipayan church."

"If it is we'll be in the calaboose tomorrow."

At the left stood a fair-sized, wooden building. "Must be the Padre's den," decided Gene. "But how he manages to give no sign of life after all our advertising is beyond me."

Edward tried the door.

"Strange," he muttered, "everything is closed up. The windows down below are all shuttered too. The second floor has some open windows. I'll have a look." He shinnied up the veranda's post to the second story and then started across the balustrade of the porch to an open window. It led to an unfinished room as bare as a bone and musty with bat odor. Back to the veranda rail he went and crawled along it to the post. Suddenly a gunshot blasted the stillness and set the hollowing plaza echoing and re-echoing with sound.

"My God!" cried out the priest as he slid precipitately down the post. Father Barry broke his fall.

"Holy cats!" gasped Gene digging his way out from a tangle of cassock and limbs. He gazed stupidly around. "What down is it?"

"Two downs, I guess," mumbled Edward. "My hands are full of slivers."

"My head is full of stars and church bells ringing — why don't you wear rubber heels?" he demanded indignantly.

"Sssh!" cautioned the other. "You want that rifleman to take another shot at me? Probably one of the Constabulary saw me crawling around and thought I was a housebreaker."

Father Barry edged his way cautiously to the gate and

peered out. He wiggled back. "I can't see anyone," he said decisively. "Let's wait here till somebody comes. . . ."

The minutes passed. "Ed, what's the word in the native dialect for *Kamerad*?" he whispered suddenly.

"Don't know, Gene. *Amigo* is the Spanish for it."

"Gee, I hope he knows Spanish," said Father Barry fervently.

After a time, when nothing happened, they decided to work their way deeper into the enclosure and to examine the entire premises. The church doors were locked. The property behind the edifice had a barbed-wire fence. Squirming through it they discovered that it merely led to another part of the encircling wall. They began to wonder if Padre Pedro did not live like a chipmunk in a burrow. Despairingly, they determined to risk leaving the grounds by way of the gates.

Cautiously they crossed the plaza toward a light that they saw burning dimly a distance off. Knocking at the door of the lighted hut, they finally aroused a half-clad youth to whom they signified their urgent need to see Apo Padi Pedro (Reverend Father). The name made sense to the youth. In shirt and slippers he led the way to a hut near the rear portal of the church. He took a stone and thumped the door, which was opened by the sleep-heavy padre, clad in a nightshirt.

"Padre Pedro! Hello!" exclaimed Edward.

"Hello! but who . . . who . . ."

"Maine, Kennebec, on the Penobscot River," chanted Edward. "I am Edward Courtney, a graduate of that geography class you used to conduct years ago."

"Why, why — Edward, my dear boy, come in, come!" and he shook the young priest's hands and suddenly came to life. With a word of thanks he dismissed their guide and led them into a funereal-looking room that smelled strongly of incense. "I had the notice, Fathers, yes, I had the notice. There was no bus any more tonight, so they said. The one due to arrive was so many hours late that it must be completely

broken down, so they said. So I went to bed."

Hopping about in his bare feet, he lit another candle.

"Now what do you want to eat? I have no cook. Some ladies across the plaza cook my meals and a boy brings them over, but I always have a few things on hand."

"Oh, anything will do," Edward assured him, "at this hour of the night we don't expect steak and onions."

"Well, then . . . ah . . . will you have some corn flakes?"

From a small box in a corner, the missionary brought forth two boxes of corn flakes and some tins of evaporated milk. The guests ate two or three plates of corn flakes drenched with tinned milk and water. By way of dessert the good padre insisted on their partaking of a glass of wine. Fluttering about in his nightshirt he chattered about the days when he had held the ferule over them. The wine and cornflakes and evaporated milk failed to satisfy the demands of Father Barry's appetite, but had the effect of a soporific. Their genial host shepherded them into a room separated from the high altar by a partition. He sat down on Edward's bed and had another long round of chitchat. It was past midnight when he finally fluttered out of the door.

"I don't know whether I am going to sleep tonight, Ed," muttered Gene as he tucked in his mosquito net.

"Why, what's wrong?"

"This breakfast food—it's going to keep me awake," replied the other.

"But you had a nightcap."

"So I did," came the drowsy reply. Soon afterward a gentle snore endorsed the statement.

In the dark, scores of bats were chittering about within the church in search of mosquitoes and other food. The little room felt like a vault; the hollow-sounding reverberations of it! Liturgy didn't allow this—sleeping in a church. Well . . . he'd discuss it in the morning. He was finding it hard to sleep these nights in a new land. The disappointment of his new assignment was still fresh in his mind. "Why is it,"

he reflected, "that as I go journeying on to my destination I laugh and observe and ask questions but inside of me something seems dead. I came to the foreign fields with Christ's song of love ready to my lips. Now the song is stilled. I feel as though there were a crown of thorns about my heart. . . .

"But one thing is needful, my heart keeps telling me — Christ in my soul, and Christ at my side. As long as He abides what difference the work I put hand to? My heart tells me that, but my natural inclinations are up in arms against it. I must earn my commission. I must, by prayer and whole-souled devotion to the task assigned me, prove myself fit for the greater task of pioneer work. By that work I hope to make atonement for another man's sin, to save a soul. . . .

"At the elevation this morning my eyes looked up at the chalice I held aloft — I prayed: Pour into the empty cup of my dissatisfied heart — pour, O Son of David, pour the streams of Your overwhelming grace to comfort, to console, to strengthen and direct me. . . ."

At breakfast the next morning, Edward complimented his host on the fine choir he had.

"Choir?" was the blank reply. "There was no singing at your Mass."

"Plenty," laughed Edward. "A whole chorus of birds were twittering all around the altar."

"Oh, the birds, yes. Well, we could not finish up the church to the roof. So they come in. They have nests here too. It would be different if I had the money to finish the walls." He wagged his head: "Money, money — it is the root of all evil. Especially when you don't have any. You saw that house near the gate?"

"Yes, we thought it was your rectory."

"It was, but now it is not. Now it is an elementary school. I live in this little place and I get dropsy maybe. But I must have school. Otherwise all the children go to the public school and I lose all my Catholics."

The houseboy interrupted his recital. A visitor was at the door. The slight screen scarcely hid the newcomer's body and was certainly no obstacle to hearing. "Apo?" (Father).

"Ah . . . Señor Presidente . . . good morning."

"Father, you must make a procession. Last night there is a demon in your house."

"A demon?"

"Yes; the municipal policeman, that Pablo Nuñez, is in the shop across the plaza and it is almost midnight. He looks and there on your house by the gate he sees a big cat walking on the veranda. He hides behind a tree and watches. The cat goes into the house. Maybe it is a robber. He will see. The demon comes out. Pablo takes the gun and shoots at the cat — but it does not fall, it does not cry out — no; it spreads its big black wings and flies away."

"What imbeciles! What idiots! — What children!" ejaculated the priest. "It is not a cat that Nuñez sees, it is a priest looking for me, a padre Americano!"

"A padre? But it has four feet!"

"Yes; of course, it has four feet — because there are two priests — look!"

Around the corner of the screen a broad, brown face peered and stared in amazement at the two smiling faces. Abruptly it disappeared.

"Dios mio!" came an ejaculation.

The priest came back to his guests. "Nearly twenty years have I spent in this land. Every week I find out something new."

Padre Pedro strung together a budget of anecdotes, reminiscences and autobiographical details. He told his visitors the difference between Filipino time and American time — the former is sun time, the latter is watch time. The former is always inclined to be an hour or two off. As though in corroboration of his discourse the one o'clock bus which was to take them to the province's capital town, Santa Rosa, arrived at three o'clock.

The Santa Rosa bus was a modern barouche of parts. It was one gradual, graceful sag from stem to stern, like the curvature in an overstuffed sausage. On its roof it bore a cargo of earthen jars, shocks of rice, clusters of coconuts, bundles of firewood and a conglomeration of rolled-up mats and sugar cane. Inside the car the native passengers, male and female, were crammed together, betelnut chewers and cigar smokers. More baggage, combustible and otherwise, was wedged and worked in. Edward was jammed into a space over two dripping blocks of ice. His seat was a thin board stretched across what was intended as an aisle.

"Things are comparatively cool with me, Gene," he called out. "How about you?"

The natives all looked at the one addressed.

"I am going up in steam," Gene growled back. "You always did have luck."

At the first stop a barefooted fisherman with a string of long-since dead fish boarded the bus. Observing the blocks of sloppy ice he speedily decided on a little free-of-charge refrigeration. He placed his fish on the ice. Gene Barry's face gradually developed a grin as he saw the change that was being made.

Throughout the afternoon the bus crossed many rivers. At most of them the passengers disembarked, and the bus was ferried across in one *balsa* (raft) and the passengers in another. The first time this happened, Gene Barry's curiosity was aroused.

"Look how they are going to get us across," he exclaimed.

"By means of the current, I guess," said Edward. "The raft is attached by a pulley to that cable running across the river. I suppose the force of the current pulls the *balsa* against the cable and starts the pulley running."

"But that isn't all," retorted his companion. "Look at that fellow."

A *balseiro* (a raftsmen) clad in a straw hat and dingy blue

pantaloons placed both hands on the railing of the raft and both bare feet on the cable directly beneath; slowly he began walking the raft across, the current helping.

"I'll bet he has corns on the soles of his feet after a year of that," commented Gene.

It was dark when the bus arrived at Santa Rosa. When the two missionaries stumbled out of their conveyance, a Filipino boy approached them, took hold of each priest's hand, kissed it, and then possessed himself of their satchels.

"I guess we follow," said Gene.

"Don't these Filipino boys make you feel at home, Gene?" asked his companion as they stumbled along after their barefoot guide. "Sort of make you feel you are expected, even wanted. The kissing of the hand—sort of tells you you're the priest and so you can be sure of reverence and hospitality."

"How can you start philosophizing after a six hours' bus ride with fish stink for your dinner is a mystery—ouch, nother rock. That boy and his bare feet misses 'em."

"I guess he knows all the rocks."

"And that's no lie—here's the house."

Father Enrique, a big burly outline of white in the gloom, was waiting at the bottom of the rectory steps. His greetings were effusive. "Did your bus have a sleep on the way? Three hours late, it is."

"No; it didn't delay," replied Father Barry. "It started late."

"The usual reason for lateness in the tropics—that *mañana* spirit," smiled their host, "and it costs you your supper this night." Father Barry looked stricken. "The cook got tired waiting and went home."

"Don't tell me we are going to—to have corn flakes for supper," burst out Father Barry in a despairing voice.

The burly priest shook with laughter.

"I can see you have just come from Pulpándan. There it

is always corn flakes, no? I have got plenty of tinned goods. If you run in that room and try my patented shower wash, I get you a supper ready, quick."

In the room indicated the weary guests found a sort of sprinkling-can attachment affixed to a big tank which rested on two boards. They took turns experimenting with it and managed to get entirely wet. Primitive though it was, it proved to be a refreshing means of taking a shower.

A gasoline lamp threw a bright light over a table of assorted foods, still reposing in their cans.

"First," declared their behemoth host whom they soon discovered to be a Hollander, "we must syringe the throats with this," and he removed the tops from two bottles of beer.

Father Barry drank his glass at one draught.

"It's a wonderful antiseptic," he sighed.

"One of the world's most wonderful inventions, I think," agreed the Hollander, "and now we have something to eat."

There was bread, and canned butter, canned milk and canned sausages, and a huge dish of cold rice.

"I eat so much of this canned stuff," complained Father Enrique, "that sometimes I think I get a sickness which makes me all tin on the inside . . . but I grow not thin on the outside," and he laughed loudly.

Tired out from their long ride and their cramped positions in the bus the two young missionaries soon had finished their meal and were off to bed.

Father Barry's last words were: "In peace I will sleep and take my rest. Tonight no corn flakes!"

Chapter 6

WHEN Father Edward ascended the altar next morning for the celebration of Mass, he felt like a medieval monk. The venerable place of worship, dark, mysterious, and sour-smelling with dust odors, was like the crypt of an ancient monastery. Around the empty vault of the building his voice rumbled and re-echoed like a ball in a time-dried drum. He felt quite alone: a priest performing the solemnest act of sacrifice with only his Mass server as witness. But someone was watching him. At the moment when his knee bent for the elevation a bell in the church tower boomed out like a gun.

Toward the close of the Mass the outside world obtruded itself on his notice; shrill salvos of cock crowing poured into the church's open windows, announcing the new day.

A short while later Father Enrique located his houseboy slumbering soundly under the veranda steps. The two priests, awaiting breakfast, heard their host stir up the boy's zeal. "The padres are hungry. Will you sleep or will you cook? If you don't cook, maybe they will give you many strikes and beats."

"Sounds like vegetables," Gene commented.

The breakfast was finally forthcoming. When Father Barry had cleared away his second portion of eggs and rice their host cleared his throat. "Now we will go down to the seashore, which is very beautiful."

Obediently they donned their sun helmets and followed him out-of-doors.

"You see," he said pointing back after they had crossed the plaza, "the wall that goes around the church and house? When I come it is too low, so I higher it. Now no pigs and goats come in and eat my flowers."

As they walked down a neat, palm-lined street, Father Enrique began to perspire freely.

"I am not made to walk in such a country and I must go up in those hills. So my good friends give me a motorcycle, but it is always flat in the back tire. Maybe you can regulate it?" he asked beseechingly.

"Gene knows all about motorcycles," Edward assured him. "He will probably be able to fix it for you."

"Sure, I'll look at it when I get back," volunteered the priest.

They stopped before an open stretch of field where the rice crop was being harvested. Small groups of deeply browned men, women, and children were moving about, huge straw hats on their heads. Some were working in the shelter of squares of plaited *sawali* propped up by a bamboo pole. All were busy, stooping, garnering the grain-laden head of the yellowed stalks. Far off in the distance ran long, haze-covered mountain ranges with fluffy bits of clouds clinging to their sides.

"You see how they do it?" asked their stout guide. "With the little knife they cut the rice close to the top and so they leave the long stalks of straw."

"Slow, isn't it?" Gene Barry remarked.

"Yah, but very complete. When it is all finished the farmer rolls up the wire fences and lets the carabaos in and they eat what little things he did not get."

"And then?"

"They plough all the straw under and that is the fertilizer for the next rice."

"Do you have many Catholics here?" asked Father Edward.

The priest nodded agreement. "Yah; many Catholics, but, over there," gesturing toward the mountains, "many pagans — and my motorcycle his back tire is flat. The horses are too small," he added as an afterthought.

They came to the beach. The water ran out from the shore in a gradual slope. Far off a line of breakers boomed their sad dirge. On the horizon line a fishing smack stood out, its sails still as a picture. On the strand a *banca* was drawn up, tilted to one side and resting on its bamboo outrigger, and around it lazed some fisherfolk. A near-by cluster of coconut palms sheltered a group of *nipa*-roofed huts. The two massive arms of the mountain curved out in a majestic arc into the sea.

Of a sudden a pair of youngsters darted forth from the palm grove. They ran laughing and shouting right up to the edge of the waters. One of them then took a stick which he had been carrying and thrust it upright in the firm sand. With one or two practiced gestures they had their two articles of wearing apparel removed and draped upon the stick. Away they went plunging and shouting and splashing into the water.

"Efficiency experts," remarked Gene Barry.

As though in demonstration of the statement, one of the lads, a golden glistening bronze, ran out of the water and seized an old dried-out half of a coconut husk. He split it on a rock and taking the quarter of it stuck a stick in the center of it. A vagrant piece of paper was attached to the stick and pushing back into the water he soon had his improvised boat sailing gallantly on the swell.

"It gets hot now," warned Father Enrique, "and so we must go back."

Clad as they were in their black cassocks, the regulation outdoor wear of the priests in the Philippines, they soon felt the sun's power. By the time they had attained the shelter of the rectory they looked and felt like a pair of bedraggled water spaniels.

"Heavenly stars!" ejaculated Father Barry, "this is the place where the mercury chokes the thermometer's throat."

"Yah, you understand maybe now," grunted Father Enrique, "why the people do not run around so during the day and why they come maybe an hour or so always late. You must be slow, nah? Otherwise you don't live very long."

That evening the sun staged a pageant of flaming cloud and color. From the depths of an easy chair on the veranda, Edward gazed at the beauty of the spectacle. He heard the voice of Father Barry inside the house quizzing their host on such mundane matters as drains, the cost of rice, and the problem of roofing.

The dark of eventide deepened. The church bell rang out. The voices inside the house hushed.

"What is that bell ringing for?" Edward called out.

"That is the Almas Bell," replied his host. "We must pray now for the Poor Souls."

"Almas Bell," Edward mused, "a bell asking prayers for the Poor Souls. I suppose that prayers will be going up now from those *nipa* huts off there in the distance, prayers for the fallen, for the slumbering dead of the Campo Santo and for those sleeping their last sleep beneath the waters of the sea." He closed his eyes. The thought came to him that our beloved Catholic ones are never dead.

Late the next morning, when the missionaries mounted the bus which was to convey them to Calbiga, their last stopping place before the seminary, the sun was already blazing in the sky.

"Thanks greatly for the fine care and hospitality," said Edward as he shook their stout host's hand.

"Ach, that is nothing," mumbled the big man awkwardly, "we are missionaries together, huh?"

Father Barry regretted that his stay had to come to an end so soon.

"Nah, nah," admonished his host. "Everything has an end,

no? — except the sausage, which has two,” and he laughed all over.

Away swept the bus with noisy grunts. The last they saw of Santa Rosa was its stout pastor walking slowly back toward his rectory. He was wiping the back of his neck with a huge mop of a handkerchief.

Chapter 7

THE church at Calbiga was of magnificent proportions. Its façade with its nicked figures of saints was hoary with blackening fungus, its top covered with plants that had caught a precarious hold in the cracking mortar. The driver pointed to the church: "Padre Cruces there!"

"Oh . . . thank you," Edward said, jumping down from the bus.

"So this is Calbiga" Gene Barry remarked. "If you ask me, it seems to be nothing but church."

A white-gowned figure emerged from the church's dark portals.

"It must be Father Cruces, the only Filipino priest in this province," Edward said.

Father Cruces, a stockily-built young priest, came forward with a cordial greeting. They were rather apprehensive about their first stay in a Filipino dwelling, but their host soon put them at ease.

On the veranda after dinner they reposed in some *mañana* chairs for siesta. A heavy chuckle woke Edward from a doze. Father Cruces' face was contorted with laughter. His finger indicated a disconsolate-looking object weaving its way along the veranda. "The cat," he explained, "she fall in the oil barrel."

"Well, she's leaving footprints on the sands of time. She's tracking up your veranda with oil."

"That's nothing," laughed his host, pointing to the cat's woebegone visage. "Very funny that!"

"She's what we call in United States 'well oiled,' " said Gene Barry.

Later in the afternoon they visited the church. It was a large building, the lines of its strength tremendous, but in a state sadly needing repair. In serried ranks bats clung to the ceilings. The air was offensive with their distinctive stench. Gazing at the deep walls and magnificent timbers that spanned the ceilings Edward exclaimed: "Those old Spanish missionaries were grand men, God bless them! They could build!"

"Yes," Father Cruces agreed. "They were architects, scientists, artists, soldiers, and great doers of every description. But you know their history." Leading the way up to the altar, he pointed to the appurtenances, the huge candlesticks, sets of engraved flowers, and the tabernacle. "These are all silver, from the time of Spain," he said.

"How did you manage to keep all these things intact during the revolution?"

"We have some good Catholics here. When the insurrectos come our people bury everything. After the revolution they tell the new padre where to find them. So all is here, just like in Spanish times."

A door gave access to the bell tower. The wood of the ladder leading upwards was ant eaten and perilously weak with age. "Lean on your Guardian Angel, Ed," Father Barry cautioned his companion as they footed their way cautiously, "or you will do another parachute descent."

From the bell embrasures of the tower the town was visible in a circlet of palms near the seashore. It consisted of *nipa* huts with a few figures idling about.

"That is very interesting," their host stated. "There is a fire in that end house one night. Some *bomberos* (firemen) go inside to put it out. Pouf! a little wind and the fire is on the roof of the next one. The *nipa* — it is very dry — it goes

like gasoline. My sacristan, a good boy and a brave boy, is there with me. I say, 'Pelong, if the fire on that roof is not put out all the houses catch fire! He takes off his shoes, climbs to the roof like a cat, tears out the burning piece and saves all the rest of the houses. All the people are there and they clap. He waits to see if more sparks come. They come and he puts them out, quick. He crawls down then to the ground and the people praise him. He is very proud. His hands and feet are a little burned and his eyes are very red from the smoke. He sits down and reaches for his shoes . . . they are gone . . . stolen!"

"That was a dirty trick."

Father Cruces laughed. "I bought him another pair." He gestured inland toward the mountains. "At the foot of those mountains is Caburoyong. A very funny village that," he smiled reminiscently. "They cannot elect a *capitán* because there are two big families and each votes for their relative. The vote is always exactly same. Same number of people in each family."

"A tie, eh?" said Father Barry.

"How was it settled?" Edward asked.

"I settle it. With a rifle. I say that the candidate of each family will shoot at the target. The one who makes the most bull's-eyes, he is the *capitán*; because the one who sees straightest leads the people straightest. Everyone is happy. It is a great contest. All the village is the witness. They clap and shout and drink *basi* while the two candidates shoot."

"Who won?"

"*Capitán* Manuel, my very good friend. He makes many bull's-eyes; but the other he never makes one." He paused and sighed deeply and gazed sadly off into the distance. "I think I have a very big sin."

Startled at this abrupt termination of the narrative, the two young missionaries gazed at him in silence.

He smiled at them in melancholy fashion. "I look up the case in Noldin but I cannot find it."

"If you couldn't find the specific case, you have to apply a general principle," dogmatically decided Father Barry.

"Well, then, it is the gun. When *Capitán* Manuel shoot it is good. When the other shoot there is no bead on the end."

"You mean you removed the end sight?" Father Barry asked.

Father Cruces nodded abjectly.

"But why did you do that?"

"Because Manuel is a Catholic," and he grinned like a boy: "Then there is a Catholic *capitán* in the village and it is easy for me to give instructions."

Father Barry burst out laughing. "You're a Machiavelli, Father."

"Is there a salary connected with the position?" Edward asked.

"None; only the name and the honor."

"Still . . ." Edward persisted.

"I must make restitution, maybe?" queried their host. "I think so, too. So the next election was last week and there is target shooting again. There is the bead on the end of the gun for the other candidate this time, but not for *Capitán* Manuel. So this time the other one wins. His name is Carlos, *Capitán* Carlos."

"Well, that seems to even up the score," Edward decided.

"Except that he has lost his Catholic *capitán*," Father Barry remarked.

"No. This one is now Catholic. I baptize him just before the election . . . the target shooting," replied Father Cruces.

Late that evening Father Barry was giving their Filipino host a vivid description of the wonders of the New York subway. With a murmured excuse Edward slipped out of the room. A connecting gallery led him from the rectory into the choir loft of the church. Kneeling down, he fixed his eyes on the sanctuary lamp. It was the hour most loved by him for prayer. He savored the beauty of it all. About him

reared the walls that missionaries, far from home, even as he, had toiled to raise for Christ's dwelling. Oh, they had made mistakes, for they were men and heirs to human frailties. But wasn't this venerable monument of love an ample expiation, was not this tradition of beauty which they had left in so beautiful a shrine also a reparation? Perhaps some of them had fallen from the idealism with which they had made the initial sacrifice. Yet they were far from the inspiration of their native environment, the supporting atmosphere of Catholicism, they were months and years in a rut of uninterrupted sameness, heat, and paganism.

Along these dusty roads which I so swiftly traversed these past days, he told himself, the Spanish conquistadors toiled. Hard on their heels came the yet more intrepid conquistadors of Christ, the missionaries, armed with a cross. What the former had temporarily gained by the transient power of arms the missionaries tried to make lasting by the perpetual power of love. And here, centuries later, I kneel, in a shrine of their making. I, too, am a missionary.

Next day it was stiflingly hot in the crowded bus. Edward studied the features of the people crammed up against him. On his right was a broad-bosomed Filipina with a child in her arms and bundles of things about her person; on his left was a venerable tiller of the glebe with a complexion the color and ruggedness of acacia bark; in front of him squatted a not overclean individual with a *barong tagalog* shirt on, a denizen of the cockpit, whose bird nestled protectingly in his arm.

Edward turned his head a trifle to see what was over his shoulder. Just then the accident happened. The bus spun around a bend and the board that Edward was using as a seat slipped from its supports. The priest disappeared suddenly from view. One leg he removed from the Filipina Doña's egg basket, his left elbow he extracted from his neighbor's ribs, and his hat was very politely picked off the fighting

cock's protesting head and returned to him by the squatting figure in front of him. The priest juggled the fugitive board back into position. He paid the Doña five centavos for the eggs his foot had smashed.

Two hours later the bus arrived at a village where several of the passengers disembarked. The places were immediately taken by a bevy of Catholic girls, Children of Mary, on a pilgrimage to a famed shrine. They were dressed in clean white dresses, with a light blue sash about the waist. Their black tresses were neatly braided and the joy of the day was on them all.

The girls began to sing religious songs, folk songs, anything that came into their minds. Edward listened to old English hymns, familiar to him since childhood days. It touched him that they should be sung way out here in this tropical land, thousands of miles from home, by people of another race. Father Barry tried to be jocular.

"Say," he remarked to one of the girls, "those are our songs. You have taken our songs."

"You are American, Faddaire," was the ready reply. "Then you are our rulers now and so we must sing your songs. If you give us our independence we will not sing your songs any more."

The independence question is a live issue to the native. Each of the young missionaries had already heard much about it. Father Barry was exasperated at the notion of it. To his mind, the Filipinos could not obtain one iota of advantage by being cut loose from the United States. He exclaimed rather irritably: "Just what advantage would you get if you obtained independence?"

"We could sing our songs, Faddaire," the girl said.

At last one of the girls spoke to the driver and pointed to a house in the distance. At the house indicated, the bus came to a standstill.

"This is my aunty's house, Faddaire," said she to Edward and promptly disappeared in the dwelling. In a few minutes

she was back with a plate of sliced papaya which she offered to the two priests. The girl distributed other plates among her companions. A handful of *guavas* was brought out for the driver. Father Barry took a huge bite out of the inviting fruit and in his haste managed to get it down the wrong channel. He choked and coughed in distress. The driver, his mouth half full of *guavas*, pumped out a string of words that set the entire group of passengers in immediate laughter.

"What was that he said about me?" inquired Father Barry when he had recovered his breath.

The girl smilingly answered: "You did not chew it enough, Father."

The impromptu luncheon delayed them. It was nightfall when the driver sang out that they were near their destination. The bus labored up the hills until it was in the heart of a mountain range. As it rushed up the inclines and coasted gently down the slopes the moon kept playing hide-and-seek. The conveyance would start up a long hillside and the moon would be lying on the top of the road ahead like a huge silver dollar; but when they crested the summit, there, the white disk would be, not in the roadway as they had imagined, but laughing down on them from the sky and flooding the rice fields below or painting the mountain walls across the valley with light and shade. After two hours of this, the bus was honking its way raucously through a town. Lines of houses closed in about them. The spell was shattered.

"Soul filling, wasn't it?" was Edward's quiet comment.

"Like those illustrated editions of Andersen's fairy tales," said his companion.

"Seminario, Padres," announced the driver, stopping before a long two-story edifice.

By the light of the moon Edward Courtney took stock of his new home. It ran the whole length of the block and seemed to be painted in white with gray borders. Built in a toadstool style, the second story protruded considerably further out than the lower one.

"Looks rather forbidding," he said pointing to the thick wooden bars affixed to every window of the lower floor. A massive wall, twelve feet high, ran the whole length of the street.

Father Barry went to the corner of the building and reconnoitered in that direction. "Say, Ed," he vouchsafed, "it's a whole block square. Looks like they plan to keep you in at night. Let's see how it looks on the inside." They retraced their steps. "Say, it's as quiet as a morgue," the little priest remarked.

"I hope we are not going to have another escapade like in Pulupádan," Edward said.

"Well, here's the portcullis, the drawbridge, or whatever you call these things," his companion replied. Laying hold of the knocker he sounded it loudly. A voice from within asked who it was. Edward shouted out their names several times. There was a sound of rusty bolts being drawn and a thud as an iron bar dropped to the ground.

"Sounds ancient, doesn't it, Gene?"

"Looks bad for you. I can see you cooped up here for years to come, conjugating Latin verbs and digging up Greek roots with a flock of little Filipinos for assistants."

The doors swung open. A white-cassocked figure was revealed.

"Hello!" said the figure. "Father Courtney?"

"Father Courtney is right," replied the priest stepping forward.

"I am Brother José." They shook hands.

The Brother led them up a broad wooden staircase to the second story, and then down a wide barnlike corridor. He stopped before a door. "Father Rector is waiting," he said. At Edward's knock a voice said "Come in." Edward stepped into the room.

Father Barry remained outside. His eye roved rather critically up and down the hall. Old timbers, black and ageless, jutted out here and there. The floor was an ill-assorted

puzzle of broad planks that had been patched like an old garment. He shook his head. "What a dull-looking cage for Ed Courtney," he murmured. "This won't do for him. He'll certainly go sour."

Just then the door opened and Edward called him in to meet the Rector.

Book Two

Sunbursts and Shadows

Chapter 8

FROM within, the Seminario de Espiritu Santo was a barrack-like white-walled building with heavily barred windows. Edward Courtney walked its broad corridors. He sat in its donjon-keep classrooms and gazed at its scarred and uncomfortable benches. A chill went through his heart. God, if it's to do seminary work why didn't I stay home? I could do it under conditions that make the work bearable and that would insure some sort of success. At the very least I could do it in a room with daylight and no brooding bars over the windows. What can they turn out from such a warren?

He was shown over the building by the Director of Studies, Father Ignacio. The Director told him that the building was very old and had housed the love of Christ, of His apostles busied with the training of His priests. So sacrifice and love had gone into the mortar of the old firetrap! Edward loathed it; and yet here, he felt, he must pour out his sacrifices, his love, in forming Christ in young priests.

He had hoped to be a missionary, and here he would be merely a Mass priest. No administration of the sacraments; none of the real hardships of the mission trail and of combating paganism; no actual coming to grips with life; nothing really hard.

On the first evening Father Rector had him in for a talk. The older man explained that this was the crown of mission work. The seminary was forming a native clergy. The

Church is not indigenous to a land. It belongs only when people of its own soil and race are standing at the altar impetrating for their own at the Unbloody Sacrifice. Edward Courtney understood, and yet he felt he should be in the other type of work, the spadework. He listened courteously but went forth from the interview without enthusiasm.

"Faddaire!" A young seminarian was raising his hand.

"Yes, Leocadio," replied Father Courtney from his magisterial desk.

"I have no peppers. All my peppers are finished." The youngster held up a sheaf of papers completely filled with writing.

"One moment, boys," announced Father Courtney to the class. "What is wrong with Leocadio's sentence? He says that 'he has no more peppers!'"

A hand popped up.

"Yes, Juan?"

"She uses —"

"He, Juan, he! Leocadio is a boy."

"Yes, Faddaire; he uses 'peppers.' Correct it is, I have no peppers."

Another boy jumped to his feet. "Wrong, wrong, Faddaire, it must be papers."

Juan turned fiercely on the upstart. "Faddaire did not ask you any informations, you Carlos!"

"Quiet, boys," broke in Father Courtney. "Both of you be seated. Carlos was right this time. Paper is the word. Pepper is a vegetable. Come up here, Leocadio and get — what?"

"Paypers, Faddaire," replied the youngster.

It was the first period in the afternoon. The heat was at its worst and the class was drowsy. Edward Courtney, tall and cool in his spotless white cassock, looked over the class. His gaze finally came to rest on a drooping, ungainly figure in one of the front benches. Macario was the boy's name. By dint of much practice Macario had learned to maintain him-

self in a condition of coma throughout the major portion of a class without closing his eyes. He tried to offset his laziness by long sessions of piety in chapel. His intimates claimed he slept there. A cast in one eye gave his broad vacant face a still more scattered look.

Despite the buzzing of a fly around his head, the boy was comfortable. Edward went over to the impassive youth. "Wait, be still," he ordered in a crisp whisper. The heads of the entire class snapped up. "Don't move," commanded the priest. "Let me do it." He leaned over the desk. "There!" and with a wave of his hand he dislodged the fly from the boy's nose. A salvo of laughter arose from the class. Across Macario's face passed a suggestion of a smile.

"Macario," Edward said, good-humoredly, "you haven't even thanked me."

The boy stood up. "Thank you, Faddaire," he mumbled. The class laughed again.

The door of the classroom suddenly opened to admit Father Ignacio, Director of Studies. At once the entire class rose, but the Director gestured them back to their seats with a wave of his hand. It was his custom to drop in at unexpected moments to inspect the classes. Edward felt a trifle agitated. The English course had been in a pitiable state; his three months of teaching had not given much in the line of notable results.

"Well, Father Edward, could you ask the boys a few questions," said Father Ignacio.

"Certainly, Father. They are just finishing a little piece of written work. I shall ask them a few questions on some mistakes I corrected during the past week."

Edward faced the boys. "Yesterday we learned that the word corn is different from the word corns. Who can use the word corns correctly?"

The irrepressible Juan had his hand up immediately.

"My faddaire has a field of corns."

"What is corn, Juan?"

"Maize, Faddaire."

"What is it used for?"

"To cook and to eat."

"Good. Now if we have many pieces of maize we do not say 'many corns' do we? Corns means something else. I told you yesterday to bring a written description of corns to class today. What have you written?"

The boy fumbled in a book and brought out a piece of paper. Loudly and distinctly he proclaimed: "Corns. It is a hard boil that grows on the feet."

"Well, then is your sentence correct, Juan: 'My father has a field of corns'?"

A pause ensued; then the boy lifted his head and grinned.

"I am wrong, Faddaire. My father has a foot of corn."

"A corn on his foot, you mean."

"No, Faddaire."

"No?"

"Yes," replied the boy enigmatically and sat down.

A hand went up. "Faddaire," declared another boy, Florentino by name, "corns is different on my paper."

"What did you write, Florentino?"

"Corns is a burn on the fingers of the feet," came the reply.

Edward took a handkerchief from his cassock pocket and wiped his face. The inspection was decidedly not progressing in a very satisfactory way.

"Has anyone a better definition?" he appealed.

A youngster whose hair stood up stiffly like the quills on a porcupine, rose to his feet. "Mine is more better, Faddaire. Corns is a swelling skins." He sat down abruptly.

At this point the Father Director espied a shy hand hesitating at half-mast. "I think, Father, that our little friend Theophilo has a solution to the problem."

A white-faced *mestizo* (half-caste) arose, crackling a slip of paper. "Corns," he testified, "is a part of the body like a white stone made when you work too much."

An insistent hand snapped its fingers calling for attention.

"Faddaire! Has anyone said it yet? No; no one. Corns is the part of the feet that is always worn by a shoe! No one said shoes."

"Very true," said the priest, a trifle heartened by this sign of memory. "You are the only one to remember that, Jose."

A tall lad stood up. Reinaldo was his name and his sole aim in life appeared to be to outdo Jose in any line of endeavor. "But mine is better, Faddaire," he declared with a surprising lack of diffidence. "Corns is sickly flesh growing near the foot obtain from long wearing of shoes."

"Well, that's enough about corns," said Father Courtney. "I'll assign the material for tomorrow's class."

The Director held up his hand.

"Just a moment, Father. Milanio over there has been making some adjustments in his manuscript. He is ready now for publication."

The young professor bowed. "Do you wish to read your paper, Milanio?" he asked.

An intelligent-looking boy stood up holding in his hands a large sheet of paper. Edward knew him as a lad with a love of the spotlight. Clearing his throat with elaborate importance, the boy began to orate in a ringing voice: "Corns! What is corns? Corn is maize which we eat and the horses, too. But corns, ah corns, that is another. Corns is a callolous muscles often on the feet which is much used by the shoes."

At that moment the sound of the bell brought the class to a close. The next day's work was quickly assigned, the prayers were said, and Edward walked from the classroom with the Director. In the corridor the Director's face relaxed into a broad smile that merged eventually into a hearty laugh.

"Rather a rotten exhibition of biology, wasn't it, Father?" said Edward, joining in the laugh.

"The little rascals," ejaculated the Director still laughing, "can you beat them for originality of phrasing?"

"You can't," was the emphatic rejoinder. "I thought I had made the definition quite compact and plain. They certainly

decomposed it into something original," he said ruefully.

"Your work wasn't lost," consoled the Director. "They all had grasped the idea of it and that is the essential thing. Don't let this small affair put you out. You are doing remarkably well. I know that the boys like you."

The young priest looked pleased. They went up to the Director's office. Like that of the members of the staff, it was stocked with shelves of books. The two priests drew up easy chairs near the window. Though together but a few months, a friendship had already sprung up between this kindly old Doctor of Theology and the young professor.

"Getting used to the walls now?" the Director asked.

"No, Father. Some days I could just jump up on a desk and holler."

"It will wear off."

"I am afraid it won't — at least not very easily."

The old priest nodded. There are some things that words will not do much for and there are some questions which the real friend knows at once he must not ask. For some moments the two priests sat in silence. Then the older man spoke. "Father Rector intends to ask you to do some work among the students of the public high school. We have about 4000 of them in this town. All, or practically all, are baptized. But if someone does not round them up they will not even make their First Holy Communion."

"Can I do anything for them?" the younger priest asked. His tone was listless.

"Undoubtedly," asserted the Director. "Start a Catholic Club. They will be glad to speak English with you. They are always glad to meet an American priest."

"Well, I'll chance it. Maybe, I'll like it," he added.

Chapter 9.

IT WAS the ninth day before Christmas. The rainy season had come and gone. The famed Aguinaldo Masses were to begin. The roosters had just begun their solos when the bells of the church tower roared out their summons to the faithful. Devout Catholics in Santo Espiritu rolled themselves into extra shirts, neck cloths, or shawls and shuffled off to church. They walked stiffly, swathed in their extra garments, for they found the December dawn cold. The paved street leading to the cathedral echoed with the clackety-clack of the churchgoers' wooden-soled slippers.

Edward hurried out of the seminary. He had heard much about the wonders of this Novena of Masses and he had promised the boys to witness them. At the entrance of the church two old Filipinas were squatting. A wick inserted in a small can of peanut oil threw a glow over them. Smoking huge cigars, they were offering candles for sale. Inside the church door the priest gazed in surprise at the great throng which crammed the edifice. Clear up to the altar they ranged. Patiently he worked his way through the press and located his confessional. It was the type of confessional in use in the tropics: a grilled board at each side of the priest, a chair set between for the confessor, and no drape or door for either penitent or priest so that a full view of the church was possible. At once he was busy with his sacred functions.

The Aguinaldo Mass began and Edward was repeatedly

distracted from his task of shriving by the sounds of hymns and cymbals and castanets that came from the choir loft. There were festive airs supposed to portray the exultant angels notifying the shepherds that Christ is born. It was not all in the best taste, he thought, as far as Church music was concerned. Indeed the violence of the brass and the vehemence of the singers rather bewildered him. But the expression of childlike faith on those hundreds of faces assured his priestly soul that all was well, even if it didn't harmonize with the canons of his Western upbringing.

When the crowds had swarmed out of the church at the conclusion of the Mass, a flood of chatter and greetings filled the air. Vendors were squatting in the dust alongside the roadway, hunched over their oil lights and trying to snatch some trade from the crowd of returning churchgoers. Some sold the much-favored *bibingka*, a flat cake made of rice and an egg, and dished up in a bit of banana leaf. Others offered fruits or warm drinks for sale. Vague, indefinite clumps of black, the throngs surged into the street. Some stopped to eat or to drink. All seemed chilly but happy. The Christmas spirit seemed pervasive. They had all attended the First Aguinaldo Mass, which meant that for them the Christmas season had begun.

As Christmas drew near, Edward sorely missed the quality of expectancy to which he had been accustomed since childhood. The warm days, the lush palms, the listless air, all conspired to withhold from him anything in the line of a Christmas feeling. His thoughts kept winging their way homeward. New York under a mantle of snow; the crowded department stores, the happy shoppers; parcel-laden throngs in the subway; devout throngs in the churches where the Advent Novena renewed in song and prayer the age-old longing for a Redeemer. He felt so futile, so homesick. It was not merely the absence of the rollicking spirit, of the cheery bustle, of the solemn expectancy that caused this feel-

ing of futility. What hurt him most was the lack of all soul work. A dribble of confessions now and then; a conference to the seminarians. How could he be satisfied with that? And yet he must. He went down on his knees and prayed.

His thoughts drifted. He remembered how his mother used to tell him the tale of the gleaming star and the men who followed it. Gaspar, Melchoir, and Balthasar she named them, and it had always been a struggle to remember those names. How amazed he had been years later to learn from his exegetic studies that the names of the Wise Men are not mentioned in the Gospels. But then they do not need names. The beauty of their deed lives on; what matters the name of the doer?

Christmas Eve was closing in a vivid splash of red. Edward had been composing a letter to his mother. He laid down his pen and went to his balcony. In front of him was a group of palms; beyond that the patio's small open space, and then the grim twelve-foot wall of the enclosure. It did not look like Christmas; it did not feel like Christmas; it really could not be Christmas. A wan evening breeze arose and began to finger softly the tops of the palm trees. The boys, their Christmas Day preparations completed, had taken their baths and were trailing back to the dormitory. Beneath his balcony they passed, each brown-faced youth clad in a bathrobe of various hues. To the priest's eye they had the appearance of a group of gay-colored birds disporting their plumage.

Later in the evening when darkness had fallen, the seminary was transformed into a place of soft light and beauty. The halls and parlors, the grim classrooms and the sour-smelling refectories were hung with lanterns made that day by the boys. Strips of pliant bamboo had been bent and contorted to form stars, crowns, airplanes, cathedrals, huge flowers, and had then been covered with colored tissue paper. A lighted candle within each lantern sent forth a diffused mellow light and cast a homey feeling about the old cracked-

plaster walls and musty ceilings. A glow of good feeling was in the air. Festivity seemed somehow to have invaded the gloomy building. *Noche Buena* . . . the good evening . . . the great evening . . . the evening before Christ's birth.

"You're going to the Midnight Mass tonight, Father?" Father Ignacio asked.

"Of course," Edward replied. "Six boys from my Catholic Club are going to make their first Holy Communion tonight. They want me to hear their confessions."

"You'll be going to bed at once then, I suppose?"

Edward nodded.

"First come to my room. I want to give you a treat . . . the Filipino Carolers."

"Look," said Father Ignacio, when they stood at the window of the Director's office.

On the other side of the street a troop of youngsters were tailed out in Indian file. One carried a pole, on the top of which was a Christmas lantern in the shape of a huge white star. Another lad had a small bell, the tinklings of which announced the coming of the carol singers. When they were passing beneath the window Father Ignacio called out to them. At once they stopped. A guitar strummed a chord and the fresh young voices broke forth into a rollicking two-voiced song. The lilt and simplicity of the carol went straight to the young priest's heart. Here beneath the soft stars of the tropics the lips of children were caroling their lays of love to the Christ Child just as did the muffler-wrapt ones in the lands of snow and blustering winds. What a power that Babe's love was! By the mystery of His Love and Renunciation, he had linked the world's far-flung spaces into a unit. The Christ Child had chosen him to be His missionary and by his love and renunciation to keep those bonds intact. When the song stopped, the young priest roused himself from his abstraction. Father Ignacio was dropping a handful of centavos to the choristers. They called back their thanks, *Dios ti agnina!* (God pay it back to you!) and their wishes

for the season: *Felices Pascuas!* (Merry Christmas). The bell tinkled and the troop moved on.

"Beautiful," the young priest said enthusiastically. "I wish they would have stayed longer."

"Oh, there will be plenty of that tonight. Do you see that group of men around the entrance to Señor Velasquez's house? Over there. Yes? Well, that's another troop. Guitars, this time. A sextet. Listen!"

A legato melody floated out on the air.

"I'd like to stay and listen to them," Edward said.

"You had better take a nap till eleven o'clock, at least," the other advised. "It's a strenuous night, you know. Drop over here for a view of the plaza before you go to the cathedral. It will be a grand sight."

Obediently Edward slipped off to bed. At eleven o'clock he was back in Father Ignacio's room. His first glance out of the window was a revelation. The cathedral, fronting one side of the plaza, was a vision of light. The plaza itself was swarming in gay confusion. *Carromatas* jolted heavily in from the villages, laden with people. *Calesas* went clacking along, their drivers clanging bells to get through the crowds. An auto horn squawked as an opulent *politico* drove slowly through the laughing throngs. There were cries and greetings on all sides. Groups of townsfolk, entire families, and village crowds, shouted salutations. Columns of people surged toward the entrances to the cathedral. One spirit directs the current, one current rules the vast stream of humanity — *Misa de Gallo* — the Midnight Mass of the Islands — they will be present at it.

The night is warm. Overhead the myriad stars gleam. A broad-spreading acacia tree in the center of the plaza is bedecked with the flickering lights of countless fireflies. It is like a huge Christmas tree.

"The bishop will be entering the cathedral now in procession," said Father Ignacio. "You had better get into your surplice and biretta," he advised.

"Yes, Father — it is a wonderful sight — this — all of this," said the young priest, gesturing at the endless movement of the crowds and their steady progress toward the church. Reluctantly he left the Director's room. But the spell of the lights were too strong for him. He slipped into the library, the windows of which commanded a wide sweep of the town. From every hut and house that lined the dusty streets below, lanterns, lovely, multicolored, softly glowing, beamed warmly. Within all the dwellings preparations were being made for a Visitor. The crowds were waiting, waiting, waiting. The young missionary realized that here, too, in this far-off land, just as at home, cold hearts were again being kindled, timid souls were feeling the resurgence of a new life, selfishness was melting into generosity, and all were being changed for the better on this blessed night.

Suddenly a peal of bells rang out from the old tower: brass hooves drumming on quivering metal; the whole world rocked with "*Glorias*" and with exultant melody . . . Christ is born! *Venite adoremus!*

He hurried to his room, snatched his biretta and surplice, and made a precipitate dash for the cathedral. The central aisle was cleared when he entered. Quietly he took possession of a confessional against the rear wall of the church and looked along the illuminated length of the church at the densely packed benches, the snowy-white drill suits, the variegated colors of the women's gowns with here and there a jewel gleaming. An air of expectancy heralded the bishop's entry. Children whispered inquiries of their elders; elderly, placid-faced doñas kept their fans moving gracefully; dainty señoritas, their thoughts for the moment perhaps a trifle more on the hang of their gown than on divine worship, adjusted and readjusted their filmy mantillas; sleek, black-haired, pomaded youths, trim in their stiffly starched whites, shot glances toward one definite mantilla or other; stout lawyers, the humble rustics, the supercilious, spectacled teacher . . . here they all were crowded together, cheek by

jowl, in the grand democracy of a Catholic church, in the democracy of love that brought to earth a God, that drew to a stable a King.

Out of the corner of his eye he caught a movement. The seminarians were entering. In a long, silent line, the smaller ones first, Juan, Vicente, and the rest of his boys, white-surpliced, blue-cinctured, they paced solemnly up the aisle. With perfect precision they halted, stepped aside, formed a line on both sides of the aisle for the bishop to pass through. As they entered the cathedral's portals, Edward noticed one or two of them break step and take a kick at something on the floor. He stood up to see better. In a moment the bishop crossed the threshold; he was mitred and carrying his crozier. At his side strode Padre Edilberto, a Spanish priest.

At the precise instant that Edward saw it, the bishop's eyes, too, fastened upon the abomination of desolation. Curled contentedly on the floor, between the two holy-water basins, and directly in the center aisle, a mangy, flea-ridden mongrel, lay asleep.

The bishop took a slight step forward and gently put his episcopal slipper against the sleeping dog. The beast did not move. Padre Edilberto, incensed at this utter disregard of the rubrics by an insensate animal, stepped forward and urged the curled-up mongrel out of the path. The dog rolled over awkwardly a few times and came to rest — maintaining the same position as before.

"Dios mio!" ejaculated the padre, "it is stone-stiff dead!"

A rustic came forward, took the tail of the dead dog, and trailed it out past the bishop into the plaza.

Nervously the bishop took the aspergil and blessed the faithful with holy water. The organ rocked forth some crashing chords. Then the choir sang the *"Ecce Sacerdos Magnus"* as the prelate moved slowly up the aisle.

The service was long and the thick-walled building grew intensely hot. With no slightest detail omitted, music and liturgy rolled on. Edward grew tired and was glad to be able

finally to leave the warm atmosphere of the church. But his departure did not go unnoticed. His six youngsters were lying in wait for him.

With a feeling of Christmas he asked them to come to his room for a moment. Chattering and laughing and holding on to his hands, the six boys accompanied him to the seminary. To each of them he gave a prayer book and several pieces of candy. They took his hand, each in turn, and kissed it enthusiastically. The sight of their simple pleasure made the young missionary's own heart happy.

"We are going now," Claro declared.

"Yes, Faddaire," Romulo added, "we will eat *raskaldo* now. You know *raskaldo*?"

"No. What is it?"

"It is berry good," Claro elucidated.

"Chicken and rice and peppers . . . and now I am going," Romulo finished up suddenly.

At five o'clock Edward was up again. Black were the halls now, with no mellow lantern light to liven their dull cracked walls and creaking wide boards. The festivity was over. Christmas Day itself would be just another hot tropical day. A sleepy-eyed seminarian served his two Masses. The priest then removed his vestments and went to the entrance of the building where a pair of senior seminarians were waiting to accompany him to the municipal jail. He would celebrate his third Mass there. Through the dark streets they made their way across the town.

The jail was a long, low building of stone. The death of full sleep was upon the place. Evidently the *carcelero* (jailer) had been up late the previous night. The seminarians thumped the door and shouted lustily. An apparition appeared. A thick blob of brown, clad in purple pajamas. In one eye was screwed a fat fist. The man muttered excuses and swung open the door. He had not remembered the hour . . . the prisoners were in bed . . . he forgot . . . on Sundays it was another hour . . . and the rest of it.

The jailer ushered them in, leaving the main portal wide open after them. No bolt for freedom would be made, as the prisoners were to get two cups of coffee and canned milk and bread for breakfast! No native would be fool enough to run away from that.

Aroused from their sleep, the prisoners dragged their cots into a small courtyard. The priest and the two seminarians took charge of the emptied dormitory. A variety of smells hung in the air. The floor was littered with dust, dirt, and the red-stained spittle of the betelnut chewers. In one corner the seminarians erected a makeshift altar while Edward lit a candle and said the prayers preparatory to Mass. He felt awkward, out of place, disgusted. When he had vested, the prisoners trooped in and squatted on the floor. Some extra candles were lit and placed on the altar. The young priest slowly began the Divine Sacrifice.

After the Gospel he turned to address the prisoners. Clad in loose, coarse, blue clothes, they lifted faces to him that were lined with vice and passion. The wan streaks of dawn filtering through the heavily barred windows touched the disheveled hair, the sleep-bleared eyes of the outcasts. There was Cosme, a mere boy, the least evil of the lot; he had stabbed to death an opponent in a game. 'Vico, manacled — he was mad; in a frenzy he had battered out a man's brains with a club but he had declared to Edward that he was "Catholic, very Catholic" and demonstrated by kissing a cross tattooed on his forearm. Bello, the brooding one in the background, with long hair gathered up womanwise about his head, had aroused a group of mountain tribes, going among them as a woman — a pervert — and had to face sedition charges.

The priest's eye roved over the rest of them. Some in their own dull way, he supposed, wanted to find out why he was kind to them; he had given them cigars last Sunday. They would listen, yes; they would try to do what he suggested, yes — but then he would go away and they would forget.

There they squatted on the floor waiting for the message of peace and love that he would bring them. Well, he was a prisoner, too; held in bonds by the love of his Master. Slowly, quietly he began to speak, trying to pour some of this comfort into these wayward hearts. It was a struggling attempt. One cannot talk to such men; only grace can talk.

When the Mass was ended the priest and the two seminarians took their leave. They walked slowly back through the dusty streets now flooded with light. Edward went to his room and changed into a white cassock. Then kneeling on the prie-dieu in his room he made his Thanksgiving. A prayer of gratitude rose from his heart for the peace of the seminary.

Chapter 10

THE alarm clock on the chair was ringing. From long years of habit, Brother José came off his couch in a jump. One hand choked the alarm; the other located his clothes. There followed some splashing in a basin and then the Brother left the room.

Walking heavily on slippered feet he went along the wide, cheerless, bat-swept hallway, dully murmuring a few pious ejaculatory prayers. The rooms of the Fathers ranged the length of the hallway. The Brother started at the first. A swift short knock and Father Pedro, history professor, was back from his dreams of the Napoleonic Wars.

"Praised be Jesus Christ," the Brother called out.

"Now and forever," came back the voice of History.

The Brother moved on. A rapid squeaking of furniture, a bustle of nervous alacrity answered his next summons. "*In aeternum, Amen,*" was the next reply.

"Always he answers in Latin, that Father Domingo. Well, he gets that from the theology and it never sleeps."

He stifled a yawn and jolted his knuckles heavily against the next door. "Ya, ya!" a loud voice blared back. The Brother grunted. Always the wrong answer from that Padre Edilberto. He took out his rosary and slipped a bead through his fingers. He should not think such thoughts but he did not care much for that Father. Always so loud and important. Now this fourth one was different. That Father Ed-

uardo, kind, cheery, very active, it was good to live with him. "Now and forever, Amen," came the brisk response. The Brother smiled and stepped up to the next door a shade more alertly. His fist thumped on a solid portal. "*Gelobt sei Jesus Christus!*" came his stentorian German. . . . "*In alle Ewigkeit,*" a deliberate voice answered. There followed a sound as of two bare knees coming in sudden contact with floor boards: the Rector, starting the day with his usual act of humiliation, kissing the floor. The gloom of the hallway swallowed up the Brother's figure.

Brother José entered the pantry where squadrons of house lizards were flattened against the walls and ceiling, almost too gorged with the previous night's orgy to wriggle away from the alarming noise of the Brother's entrance. He flashed his electric torch into a cupboard, flicked away a half dozen huge cockroaches from the bread and edibles, thereby startling a pair of gluttoned rats, and lifted out a bottle of altar wine. This he tucked under his arm, slammed the cupboard door shut, and went toward the chapel. Passing by a window he glanced at the sky. The stars were still gleaming, for it was not yet five o'clock. In the sacristy he deposited the bottle of wine for Mass. The next phase of his journey led him to the eastern part of the building where he unlocked a massive padlock and let down a huge iron bar out of its sockets. He went to the other side of the building and repeated this process. Back to his room he trudged, his beads going carefully through his fingers.

The life was hard, was tiresome. Here the whole world was comfortably asleep and he had to go drudging about his duties. Twenty-five years he had been doing this now. One sometimes becomes tired. But then, he carried a mission cross. He smiled a bit, plodded back to his room, arranged his bed, donned his shoes, and went to the chapel.

Edward was already there. In the light of the sanctuary lamp the face of the priest was sharply etched with shadows foreign to his features by day. He was facing the tabernacle

and seemed absorbedly, intimately in converse with Someone. The Brother had seen this every morning for quite a few months but it always impressed him. "That is a good one for praying," was his verdict. He genuflected and knelt in his assigned place. The other Fathers would be along soon and in the meantime he would say a few words to Jesus.

"Everything this day for You, dear Jesus," he began to mutter, looking simply at the cavernous dark spot beneath the red of the sanctuary lamp. "And it's going to be a very busy day again, Lord. That woman from San Esteban is coming about the old beds. She wants to buy the rest of them. She cheated me with the first ones. I'll fix her this time . . . double or nothing . . . ah, there I go, Lord. I should be kind and honest with her. But I won't let her cheat me again. It's church money. There's a gang of rascals stealing the dried fruit from the storeroom. I thought it was rats, but Lord, it isn't, it's boys. I am going to catch them — and when I do I'll beat them till their ears bleed. . . . Tsk! Tsk! Twenty-five years a religious, and more, yes more, and still my head is full of those ideas — what did Father Rector call them? — 'carnal thoughts.' That's what he meant, I think; if I catch them, Lord, I'll try to be patient. I'll just get the dried fruit back but I think the Rector will want to know their names. . . ."

The Rector entered the chapel. Small, thin-nosed, his snow-white hair close cropped, with a pair of verdigris-encrusted spectacles askew upon his nose, the Rector seemed the sort of person to be a contemplative rather than a busy administrator.

Hard upon the Rector's deliberate pacing came swift, decisive footsteps. Father Edilberto swung into the chapel, genuflected, got down on his knees and at once made a determined attack on his breviary. His main idea in life was to keep his schedule. Soon the others trailed in. Morning prayers droned forth, the Rector leading, the others responding. An hour of meditation followed. Here and there a

priestly head sometimes nodded whenever the flesh's need triumphed over the spirit's good intentions.

At the end of the meditation hour a bell rang. Seminarians trooped in. The Fathers went to the sacristy and vested for Mass. In this institution everything moved on well-oiled wheels. Nothing happened that was not down on the daily schedule. Classes, recreation, chapel, lunch, filled up the morning. Finally at one o'clock the siesta hour saw the entire community beneath their mosquito nets. It was intolerably close. The hot season was nearing its peak. In a few weeks schools would shut down. Bathed in perspiration as he lay on his mat, Edward thought that blessed date could not come too soon. The dull monotony of it all . . . heat . . . that was all that happened. A change would be welcome. He dozed.

Suddenly he was awake. He felt chilled and odd. His stomach was upset. He was violently awake. The entire room was pitching. An earthquake! Frantically he ran to the window — a short drop to the ground — oh, his shoes. He ran back. The walls of the room began to cave. Books were spilling out of his shelves. Pictures swinging wildly on the wall. Dust clouding up from the falling plaster and bricks and mortar. The alarm clock dove from the top of his desk, hit the blotter, and rolled off onto the floor. He seized a bathrobe and rushed into the hallway. It was vacant; the broad floor boards were billowing up and down, up and down. Noises filled his ears. Loosened roof tiles and mortar were crashing to the ground outside. Heavy old roof timbers groaning and cracking; thuds of heavy weights falling; rats squealing as they swarmed from beneath the roof. As he sped down the hall the up-and-down movement changed to a lateral one. The crashes, the breaking and rending and straining sounds redoubled all about him. He reached the patio and ran into a frightened group of half-dressed seminarians.

From a side door there erupted into the patio an outland-

ish figure. "*Caracóles!*" howled the newcomer and raced over to the wordless group. "Jesús, Maria, José!" he gasped. It was Father Edilberto in a flimsy, none-too-clean undershirt, belly band and *calconcillas* (muslin drawers reaching to the ankles and tucked into the socks). His face was a cheesy white.

"*Temblor! Temblor!*" he yelled at the group. Before the amused smiles could break out into remarks he was launched on his narrative. "I am out of bed with the first shake. I run to the window to get on the sill and will go down to the street. Wheeez! almost I am instantly assassinated. A landslide of tiles and cement slides from the roof right past my nose. *Canástos!* I run to the door. It does not open. *Canástos!* I grab the key. I cannot find the key. My glasses? In the bed. *Canástos!* I get my glasses. Amigos, I tremble! I turn the key. *Canástos!* the door will not open. It is wedged tight. *Canástos y re-canástos!* The floor has rheumatism, what you call, arthreeters — lumps on the joints — the floor keeps going up and my ceiling keeps coming down. One hundred thousand demons! I grab the knob, I put my foot on the door frame *c-a-a-rrr-ottt!* I pull the door out by the roots! — I rush out. And there is not even a soul in the hallway to help me. *Canástos!* I fly down the hall out here in the patio and as soon as I get here safe — what do I find? . . . no earthquake. *Canástos!*"

The tension broke. At once a babel of voices broke out, each with his own particular experience. "Did you hear the church bells, Father?" asked several of the boys. "Why no," Edward replied. "Did the movement set them ringing?"

Most of them corroborated that.

"Well, I was so busy going places that I guess I missed that," Edward said. "But," he added with a smile, "I thought that I heard Gabriel's trumpet blow rather clearly for a second."

The seminarians laughed. For the third time Father Edilberto launched into a recital of his escape from death, his description becoming more lurid by repetition. A seminarian

interrupted him. "The bell tower is destroyed," he announced. They hastily re-entered the building, leaving Father Edilberto with his hand on the doorknob and his one foot on the door frame ready to say *c-a-a-rrroottt!* The group picked their way around debris and got to a window on the side of the building facing the plaza. The huge bell tower was a ruin. Upwards of sixty feet high, the *temblor* had loosened the mortar below the topmost embrasure; the entire cupola had slipped out of plumb and was teetering precariously.

"That is dangerous," Father Ignacio said. "Ceferino," he ordered a seminarian, "hasten to the Constabulary and tell them to rope off all the streets so no one can enter the plaza." The seminarian hastened away.

"What's that?" Edward asked, pointing to a figure below. It was fumbling with the seminary door. The figure looked up. "Good Lord, it's our history professor!" he ejaculated.

"Making history," laughed Father Ignacio. "He's got nothing on but his underdrawers."

"Quick, Fathers," the embarrassed professor cried out. "Open the door, it's stuck on the inside."

Some seminarians ran down and loosened up the rubble before the door. The professor ran hastily up the stairs. The whole group gathered at his door. He thrust his head out: "Gentlemen, God gave us an earthquake but I furnished the natives with another quake — a padre *sans culotte* — in the plaza!" and he slammed his door amid shouts of laughter.

The Rector walked quietly into the group. "Is everyone all right?"

"Say, Father Rector," one of the Fathers asked, "where were you during the earthquake?"

The Rector reddened a trifle and pushed his glasses higher on his nose. "I stayed in my room. I stood under the door lintel. Those beams are very strong, you know. Over a hundred years old and if they went through so many shakes I thought they would weather this one, too."

"You tell the truth," Father Edilberto chaffed. "Didn't you have your arms held up under that door frame ready to support your cause, like Moses praying?"

The Rector good-naturedly joined in the general laugh. The group then began to disperse to their rooms and departments to ascertain the extent of damage done by the disaster. Edward found his room a heap of masonry, dirt, books, and jumbled belongings. He scratched his head and reminded himself that he had been saying that nothing ever happened here. He peered over the heap of rubble left by the collapsing wall and obtained a view of the Rector's sleeping quarters. "The bedbugs will go visiting tonight," he commented.

A sound of running feet came along the corridor. A house-boy's wide-eyed face poked into the doorway.

"Faddaire, come quick. One of your boys is died. The tiles from the President's roof is fall to his head; and he is died!"

The young priest threw off his bathrobe; jumped into a white cassock and hurried to the chapel. He seized the holy oils and ran out of the seminary as fast as he could. In front of the Presidencia the people parted and disclosed the pitiful figure on the ground . . . Romulo! A clump of tile and mortar had dislodged from the roof and caught him. His little white shirt was a mess of blood. Edward anointed him on the forehead with the short formula. There was blood on the priest's thumb when he withdrew it. The boy opened his eyes. "Jesus," he said, and that was all. In the little hospital near by, they put him on a table; a smashed little body; a little face all blobbed with blood; red, against that staring white of the surgical table.

Edward Courtney was dazed and numb all day. In the evening he tried to read, but it was of no use. One of the little boys who had laughed with him, whom he had taught to say his prayers, whose first confession he had heard, to whom he had given his first Holy Communion! It had happened so quickly. He looked up from his desk, and there in the

corner he saw his white cassock still smeared red with the boy's blood. White and red; innocence and love. His last word had been "Jesus" . . . and Jesus means Saviour. "Romulo," whispered the priest, "I tried to teach you to speak to Him, now you might speak to Him about me and do speak to Him for me. . . ."

Chapter 11

THE hot season was at its peak. Edward Courtney was spending his vacation days as an *interino* (substitute) pastor at Father Juan's place at San Jacinto in the province of Zamba. In full pride of possession he cast a look to the cardinal points of his holding and found them not so good. It was bounded on the south by a swampy sump (and Father Juan will buy a carabao and bullock cart and fill it in, some day). On the east it was shut in by a chicken cage containing a solitary rooster. On the south the domains were enclosed by a broken gate and a wall, rendezvous of mangy mongrels and gross-snouted pigs. On the west it was hemmed in by a huge stack of disheveled timbers wherein the white ants held high carnival.

Poor Father Juan! No wonder he had gotten sick, living in such scurvy surroundings. Edward could imagine what it must have meant. Days and nights killingly hot, the Father plugging away at his tasks, giving untiringly of his strength to the work, until his health had broken. When Father Juan was helped aboard the Manila-bound boat, he had looked like a sapless parchment, a framework of a man, white and listless.

"Good morning, Faddaire!"

A bronze-faced, snubby-nosed little boy was looking up at him with a pair of eyes as gleaming black as two moist chico seeds.

"Good morning, yourself," Edward replied, taking in at a glance the poor but clean trousers and light-blue shirt.

"What is your name?"

"Terio," he replied somewhat shyly.

"Terio? *Catolico*?"

"Yes, Faddaire," he nodded vigorously, "berry *Catolico*. I am the one who is the sacristan."

"Oh; you are the boy of Father Juan?"

"Yes, Faddaire."

"Father Juan is sick now."

"Berry sick, Faddaire," the boy assented. "I see many bloods coming out from his nose. I frayed to San Roque. Otherwise he is already died."

"You like Father Juan?"

The boy blinked. "I like."

"Then we can pray together that he gets well, eh? My name is Father Courtney."

"The first name, Faddaire?"

"Edward."

"Oh . . . Padre Eduardo?"

"Yes; if that is easier for you." The priest indicated a mess of words and figures chalked up on the smooth panels of the door. "Terio, what is all this stuff about? Have you been playing at school and using this as a blackboard?"

"No, Faddaire . . . that is Padre Juan."

"Padre Juan? Hmm! It's his complexion, all right." The priest was considering the chalky white surface of the door. "But it's not he."

"Yes; he hab bookkeeping classes."

"Bookkeeping?"

The boy nodded. "Some people come and he teach them. Then maybe they come to church and be good Catholics."

"Oh!" was the succinct comment. He could visualize that tired missionary sweating at such a task after a day of detail, disappointment, heat, and poor fare. Anything to gain a soul, even double entry. He smiled a bit as he turned to the

boy. "You can clean it up, Terio . . . no; on second thought I believe you had better allow it to remain as it is . . . it will be a sort of reminder for me." He sat down at a rickety table. "Padre Juan told me there is a book in which is written down everything for the *Semana Santa* (Holy Week). Where is that book, Terio?"

"*Semana Santa* Book?" the boy said slowly. "No Padre."

"Where are the books of the Padre?"

"I know. Stay here, Padre, I am the one who will get them." The boy's bare feet thudded out of the room.

Sitting in a *mañana* chair, the priest loosened his collar and mopped his face with a handkerchief. Not a breath of air was stirring, and the sun shone intensely on the corrugated-iron roof. Through the ceiling of rafters he saw the underside of the iron roofing-sheets. No wonder Father Juan had gotten sick. The place was a veritable heat trap, an oven that must have slowly boiled the sap out of his bones.

"Here, Faddaire!" Terio's triumphant voice exclaimed as the boy entered with an armful of books. "Books, Faddaire!" pointing to the heap he deposited on the floor.

"Evidently. I hope the one I want is here." Terio disappeared in the direction of the kitchen but returned after a few minutes. Unobtrusively he squatted on the floor in a corner of the room and began working on some vegetables.

Edward flipped over a few books. Cockroaches had scaled patches off the bindings. Noldin's *Manual of Moral Theology*, a *Ius Canonicum*, a book on Tropical Diseases . . . he fluttered through a few pages.

"Faddaire? You Americano?"

"How did you know?"

"Because you are berry red."

"Are all Americanos red?"

"Yes, Faddaire. Indians are berry red."

"But I am no Indian," the priest protested.

"Even Faddaire. Maybe you are a *mestizo* (half-caste)."

"Maybe you are *mestizo* too, Terio," he countered.

"No, Faddaire," came the quick denial, "Filipino, pure Filipino. All Lapulapu."

"Father and Mother?"

"Yes, Faddaire."

"Have you any uncles?"

"Fibe."

"How many aunts?"

"Aunts?" He wrinkled the corners of his eyes. "I do not know that."

The priest slowly explained how a person contracts an aunt.

"Oh! Then I have only two uncles."

"Ah, here's the book I've been looking for, Terio."

"Yes, Faddaire?"

"Yes, and it looks as though everything is noted down too. Hum! 'Statues for the procession are kept with the following families.' Will they prepare them for the procession too, Terio?"

"Yes, Faddaire. You must tell them only the time."

With the boy's aid, Edward drew up a tentative schedule of the Holy Week services and its frequent processions. The skill of a court cross-examiner was required to elicit the required information from the boy; his mind worked oriental-wise, the priest found. Conversation was therefore difficult. Finally the priest called a halt and suggested lunch.

Terio soon had the table set. Boiled eggs, rice, and a pulpy pottage of vegetables.

"Are these eggs fresh? Are they new, Terio?" the priest asked.

"Yes, Faddaire."

The priest broke the shell of one egg. An insufferable odor arose. He put it aside quickly and tried a second.

"Say, these eggs are rotten, Terio!" he complained.

"Rot-ten!" The boy sniffed them. "Yes, Faddaire, they are very bad odor. I will cook others."

A few minutes later he reappeared with three more eggs.

Edward broke the first one. Again a putrid odor tainted the air. Terio clucked sympathetically. The priest broke the second. Terio clucked despairingly. The priest picked up the last.

"Well, Terio, this has been a most unhallowed day, but sooner or later the tide must turn." His spoon crushed the shell. "Triumph!" he exclaimed and the boy grinned happily.

"Berry hot not good for eggs, Faddaire."

"This heat isn't good for anything," the priest agreed. "I rather feel like one of those eggs myself."

After luncheon the priest went for siesta to the cubicle which Father Juan had used for sleeping quarters: *sawali* walls, a crude bed, and a mosquito net that was stuffy and not overclean. A thermometer on a post in the corner of the room showed 100 degrees. Sweat poured from him. Listlessly he plied a fan but it did not help to abate the heat. Finally he arose.

"Terio!" he called. "Get me two *latas* (cans) of fresh water. Water for a bath, Terio."

"Yes, Faddaire." He took his big straw hat and shoulder pole. "The *baño* (bath) water is berry bad to drink, Faddaire. You must drink only this," and he pointed to a filter that stood in the outer room.

"Where do you get the water for the filter?" he asked.

"Every morning I get it from the well in the plaza. Berry small that well, Faddaire. If I am not there at three o'clock in the morning maybe no more water."

"Three o'clock?"

"Even, Faddaire." The boy hooked two large cans, relics of the Standard Oil Company, to the end of his shoulder pole and set out. After his departure, the priest took a thermometer and placed it under his tongue. A minute later he withdrew it. "Uh-huh! Fever." He rummaged through his bags and made a discouraging discovery. He had not brought his pocket medical kit along. He shouted to Terio to bring

back some aspirin tablets. Meanwhile with the aid of a coconut shell he tried to splash enough of the molasses-colored water over himself to get cool. Terio, returning with two cans of relatively clean water, announced that there were no aspirins to be had.

Early the next morning after Mass some Catholics of the town came to see the priest and make arrangements about the Holy Week services. Edward went over his schedule and made some adjustments and corrections. One corpulent, broad-visaged old gentleman, Abogado (lawyer) de los Reyes, closed the meeting by pointing to a small house across the plaza. It had corrugated-iron walls and a roof of similar material.

"The Aglipayanos," he said, "have trouble with their *pari-padi* (imitation priest)."

"Oh, so that is why I heard no bell ringing for their *misa-misa* (mock mass) this morning," the priest replied.

"Yes. He wanted to charge everyone five centavos as a *Semana Santa* tax but they all refused. So he becomes very red in the face and very hot in the head and went away to Manila."

"It would be a blessing for us if they did not have their services," the priest commented.

"Mr. Posadas, the representative, gets many votes from them because he is Aglipayano too. He will take care that they have a *pari-padi*. You will see," the old man prophesied.

In the evening of the same day there was some activity in the Aglipayan chapel. Their bell began to toll.

"Terio," Edward called. "What are the Aglipayans doing over there now?"

The boy squinted a moment, then replied: "A funeral, Faddaire."

"A funeral? But there is no *pari-padi* there any more."

"Never mind, Faddaire. This people brings the coffin. Maybe a lady opens it and say some prayers. Then they go to the Campo Santo."

Late next evening Edward felt increasingly feverish. Terio announced supper but the priest was in no mood for eating. "I am feverish, Terio," he explained.

"Sick, Faddaire?"

"Yes. I guess I'll have to get a sweat up to break it. Boil some water. While it's boiling go down to the store and see if you can buy some medicine for this fever."

An hour later Terio appeared with two parcels. One was a bamboo tube, plugged up at one end with a handful of grass. "This, Faddaire, is berry good. Honey, Faddaire, and Faddaire, it is very good for the cold, Faddaire."

Lying uncomfortably in the *mañana* chair the priest inquired if he had stolen it.

"No steal. I buy from the Negritos. Ten centavos — very cheap."

"That is cheap."

"The whiskey is very expensib. Twenty-five centavos . . ." he said, reluctantly drawing out a large quart-sized bottle. "and I must gib the bottle again."

The priest looked at the bottle. "Bootled in Bond" said the label. Sheer rotgut it would be, as good or as bad as the spelling on the label.

The honey mixed with hot water had a disagreeable taste but was mild compared to the rawness of the cheap whiskey that followed. It achieved little for abating the fever. The following two days were a phantasmagoria of dreams and obsessions, of chills and choking heaviness, with no one but Terio to nurse him. On the afternoon of the second day the heat became like a huge hand at his throat. He was burning up and nowhere could he find relief. He tossed and turned on his sweat-sticky mat. He called for Terio and asked for water. It was hot, unsatisfying, oily.

"Hot, hot, hot," muttered the priest. "No ice?"

An inspiration came to Terio.

"Faddaire . . . you like *cerebesa*?"

"What?"

"*Cerebesa?* Beer? In Mantang village they have it by the ice."

"Iced beer? Get some. Money is there."

Before the fever-hazed eyes of the missionary floated a vision of chill loveliness. His tongue licked clumsily at his fever-blistered lips. He didn't care for the beer, it was bitter. But it would be cold. He lapsed off into a sea of pictures and sounds upended and jumbled and unreal. Then again his eyes opened and he saw the *sawali* walls about him and felt the heavy reality of oppressive heat. At last the boy returned. A stricken look was on his face. "There is none, Faddaire," he said in a low voice.

"None?"

"Yes, Faddaire. There is none." The boy stood dejectedly, his large straw hat held in one hand. "The man say that two *soldados*, Americanos, with big stomachs come and they berry thirsty."

"Yes, Terio," said the priest and his lips made a sucking noise as they pulled apart from the saliva-gummed surfaces.

"Forty bottles, the man say, and only two *soldados*. Berry big stomach that people."

There was silence for a spell, then the priest said:

"Thank you, Terio. You ran?"

The boy grinned. "Yes, Faddaire. I ran berry hard."

"Get some water and a towel. Maybe if I keep a wet cloth on my head it may help."

Terio brought the articles and then squatted at the side of the bed.

"I pan you, Faddaire," he suddenly declared.

"Pan me?"

"Yes, Faddaire," and taking the fan from the priest's hot hand he began to sway it gently and rhythmically above the priest's face. In a short while the steady flow of air across the sick man's face lulled him into sleep. Hours long the boy stayed patiently at his side, changing the wet cloth, swaying the fan steadily and gently above the flushed face until the

priest's slow and deep breathing told him that at last he was in a healthful sleep. Several hours later Edward awoke and saw the boy sleeping on the floor.

The fever had abated and his head felt clear. He peered at his watch. Not yet midnight. So it was still Tuesday — then he remembered. This was an anniversary: three years since he had left home. In that time he had changed in many ways. He could see himself changing still more, adapting his ways of thought, speech, and living to those of this strange land and people until he was likely to become a stranger to his own.

He closed his eyes, and through the open window came a sound. The tropic night was soft and heavy with song. His heart lifted too with song. Home longings rose again within him. Nights like these are ones of sweetness for the native; children about the mellow glare of the oil lamp, a serenading lover beneath a *nipa* hut's open window. But for him, dull and restless after fever, it was just one hollow longing for his dear ones, for the sound of his own language, one bleak inventory of the day's round of efforts, duties, and failures.

He began to talk quietly to himself.

"My soul is feeble, faltering. Its only staff is that Little One who upholds the whole wide world in His Hand and clothes His omnipotence in bonds of fragile wheat. He teaches me from the Eucharistic Mysteries that in order to be something I must become nothing. I must die like the seed in the loam. Be generous to my need, O generous Christ!

Chapter 12

IT WAS Holy Thursday morning before Edward could leave his bed. Weak from the long bout of fever, he felt in no mood for the lengthy round of services that lay ahead of him. It had taken quite an effort to leave his mat but the well-crowded church was something of a requital for his pains. Slowly he moved through the long ceremonies. When he doffed the vestments, wet with perspiration, he breathed a fervent *Deo gratias*.

At breakfast Terio was like a mother with an ailing child. Two guaranteed-fresh eggs were ready for the priest and the boy stood continually at his elbow, his eyes eloquent with solicitude. A cup of strong, black coffee made a world of difference in the priest's feelings. "You're a swell doctor, Terio," the priest said with a washed-out attempt at a smile.

"Yes, Faddaire. My faddaire is a berry good fisherman."

"Oh, indeed?" the priest said politely, while his throbbing head groped futilely for some casual connection. A sudden racket from across the plaza smote his ears. "What is that rumpus?" he asked, going to the window.

"The Aglipayanos, Faddaire."

"Are they murdering someone?"

"There is a new *pari-padi* come last night. He is get money for the *Semana Santa* only. Berry big and berry ugly." He giggled.

"Why do you laugh?"

"The boys, Faddaire. The boys they see him last night and they call him 'Frogface.' "

"I should think 'Lion-lungs' would have been more fit. I can hear him distinctly." A burst of cheering came from the tin chapel. "It sounds like July Fourth," he mused.

But the Aglipayanos had not yet finished. In fact they had only begun. A band of professional howlers took up their position in the tin chapel and bellowed forth the *pasión* with more might than music for the greater part of the forenoon. At one time their performance became so impassioned that a khaki-clad figure appeared and strolled into the dwelling to make an investigation as to the cause of all this violent uproar. The policeman's inspection was fruitful. Half an hour later he reappeared from a totally different doorway of the chapel, his sun helmet tilted at an angle which only a generous libation of *tuba* could have produced.

The stars were blinking out of a warm, dark sky as the band that was to play for Edward's procession arrived. They were a barefooted group of virtuosi whose musical education was devoid of any such impediment as written notes. Grouping themselves in a circle before the church they led off with their first selection. No sooner had the last quavery blare floated away than the Aglipayan band lying in wait before their tin chapel retorted. The next hour witnessed a band concert. The welkin rang with marches and other efforts of the rival orchestras to extinguish each other by the sheer power of their lungs or by the range of their repertoire.

The duel finally came to an end with the start of the Aglipayan procession. From the veranda of his rectory Edward watched the parade get under way. There were four candle-illuminated, flower-decked floats, an image of a saint or of the Saviour on each. An acolyte, in an abbreviated cassock, suddenly appeared on the scene carrying a large crucifix in his hand. A disorderly mass of people, carrying lit candles, trailed along after him. The floats worked their way into the crowd and got into position.

The band, still unsubdued and deluging the air with loud noises, took up its post directly in front of the last float. The newly imported Aglipayan minister brought up the rear in all the glory of a purple cope and an ornate biretta.

A voice growled something in the priest's ear. He turned to face a figure whose white drill stood out in the gloom of the veranda.

"Señor de los Reyes?"

"Yes, Padre. Those statues," he gestured toward the procession, "they are ours, all of them. Thirty years ago, I was young then, Padre, and all the village was Catholic. Ah, then we had processions!"

"Did they take the statues during the revolution?"

The old man grunted an angry assent. "Stole them. Now they carry them in procession, to honor the God of Justice. *Que tontos!*" (What fools!)

"Most of them do not know about this, Señor Reyes. Some of them are misled. We have to be kind with them, patient."

The irascible old lawyer muttered a few words in Spanish that in no way smacked of patience.

"Will you order the bells rung now, Señor?" The priest was attempting to divert the man's thoughts. "We must get our own procession under way."

"Yes, Padre," the old man replied. "We will make a much better procession too." And he stalked down the veranda with brisk determination.

Half an hour later, vested in purple cope and flanked by altar boys, Edward gazed down the long gauntlet of tapers that stretched in front of him. In an arc of flickering brilliance the procession swung across the plaza. Huge splashes of white light from the floats painted the heavy pall of night and the yellow flare of hundreds of swaying and bobbing candles strung their long line of radiance across the darkness. As the procession moved, the soft chant of the rosary rose and fell. The procession circled the entire town and returned

to the plaza to conclude the ceremonies with prayers in the church.

Then the candles were snuffed out, and in quiet the people dispersed. When the last one had slipped away, the priest went to the rectory, drank a glass of water, and finished his breviary. He turned down his lamp and went back to the church.

What a stillness and peace in the church tonight, he thought. Perhaps he felt it more because of the contrast with the noise and tumult of the day's procession and the details of the many things he had attended to. He was so bone weary after that stretch of fever and he wanted rest. He found it, before the altar of repose.

There were just two adorers in the church, two fishermen from the town, doing their hour of adoration. "Poor people," he thought, "how little they have. No; how rich they are, I should say. They have God as their Friend, a Living Presence, and Abiding Presence." Then the young priest thought of the hollowness of the empty chapel which he had glimpsed across the plaza. He laid aside his rosary and began to think of his Divine Lord.

Chapter 13

THE Mass of the Presanctified and the accompanying services of Good Friday morning were finished. Tired out with the long hours in the hot, close-packed church, Edward was seated in a chair on the veranda. A tall, black-cassocked figure strode across the plaza. "Who is that Padre coming?" he inquired of Terio.

"Padre Patricio," announced the boy at once.

"Oh, Father Pat Gallagher," the priest exclaimed. "Ship ahoy!" he called out gaily.

"Ahoy there!" roared back the visitor, striding up on to the veranda. "And how is the lorn and lonely missionary?" The veranda jittered with his heavy step. His hand, big, red, and sweaty wrapped Edward's like a wet towel.

"It is good to see a fellow white man," said the young priest cordially, placing his guest's sun helmet on the floor and drawing up a chair for him.

The visitor laughed. "And you are here a few weeks only? Wait until you go through a couple of months hand running without hearing anything except dialect and not a soul of your own race within sight. I tell you, Padre, those are the times when the sight of another paleface can just about make you cry for joy."

"I have a faint idea," his host agreed.

"Hot as blazes today," Father Gallagher said, expertly skimming a line of moisture from his forehead with a prac-

ticed forefinger. "But you're looking swell. Seems to agree with you."

"I am sorry I can't offer you anything but water," Edward said apologetically.

"You can't? What's the matter with those, man?" and he jerked a thumb at a group of coconut palms.

"Slipped me entirely," Edward said ruefully.

"Teriol!" the visitor called out.

"Faddaire?"

"Get out your bolo and whack off a few of those coconuts, eh?"

"Yes, Faddaire," the boy replied. A moment later, his bolo stuck securely in his belt, he was scrambling up a fifty-foot palm with the agility and ease of a monkey. High overhead the bolo flashed in the bright sun. A pair of answering thuds announced that the green-colored coconuts had struck the ground. A few minutes later the boy prepared the fruit for the two missionaries. He lopped off one end of the fruit's green husk until the light-brown inner layer that surrounds the meat appeared. Puncturing this with a deft thrust of the bolo's tip, he poured the water from the coconut into a pitcher. The two priests drank thirstily.

"Best drink there is," the visitor declared.

"Sweetish and cool," Edward said.

"Lots of good things in this land that we learn about as we go along. The 'Mysterious East' they call it and in some respects it is always a mystery. This morning on my way to visit you I saw something I had never encountered in my ten years' stay here."

"What was that?"

"Flagellants. Filipino flagellants."

"You mean, in public?"

"Sure. Right on the road."

"Why, that is surprising. You would think the climate and poor living conditions would be mortification enough for them."

"Not for these men. I saw them from the bus. At first I thought they were a group of amateur acrobats. There were three of them, all men. Two were stripped to the waist and had a curious sort of paper cap on their heads, symbolical of the crown of thorns, and a paper band about each ankle. Suddenly one of them hurled himself into the center of the roadway. Our driver threw on the brakes and brought us to a halt just a few feet from the fellow. The words the driver let out were neither devotional nor select. The man in the roadway didn't pay him any heed but kept on rolling along in the center of the path. You know the type of gravel used on that road! Over and over he went, his bare back grinding into those sharp and bruising stones as though it were a Persian carpet. He finally stopped, face down in the thick dust alongside the roadway."

"Face down in that dust?" Edward asked. "Why that would choke any man."

"Except a flagellant. He lay there prostrate for a minute until one of his companions flicked him on the naked back with a whip. Then the three of them went down the road with a measured tread, switching their bare backs twice to each step." The priest paused and took a drink from his glass. "Heard the *pasión*, Padre?" he asked.

"Indeed, I have," Edward said with a vigorous bob of his head. "It has been wailing around the village since my arrival. What is it anyhow?"

"Oh, an old Lenten custom in the Islands, especially in Luzon. The parts of the gospels that narrate the passion of Christ have been put into a metrical translation. The people sing it in the native dialect."

"It sounded like Gregorian Chant badly done."

"Well, they say that for generations it was unaccompanied. Now in all the big towns they have musical accompaniment for it. The rich people take turns in playing the role of *hermano* for a *pabasa*, that means, in being host for the people who attend the affair."

"I've seen a sort of shrine before some of the houses, a bamboo and colored paper composition. Inside they were singing the *pasión*."

"That was one of those *pabasas*. I passed one of them in Cabanutang village. Another group of those flagellants were dusting themselves off. I told the bus driver to wait a bit, and went over to the group. Their backs were blue with swellings and bloodied from the whips. You could see sharp cuts where their skin had come in contact with the flinty gravel of the roadway."

"Did you get a look at the scourges?"

"Yes. They were certainly the genuine article. Stout cords to the ends of which were attached bits of sharpened bamboo. They left their marks, too, I am telling you."

"Did they do any scourging while you were around?"

"I was just going to tell you. One of the *pabasa* singers gave them an order. At once the flagellants went down on their knees. Did they cannonade their shoulders with those whips! I went up to one of them and asked him why he did that sort of thing. He looked at me rather dully. 'Because we have promised Jesus Christ,' was his answer. 'Is it not dangerous?' I persisted. 'But we have promised Jesus Christ,' he replied, and that seemed to clinch the whole matter."

"Did they pass around the hat afterward?"

"Not even for food or drink. They rose right up and went their way, whacking themselves unmercifully." Father Gallagher paused in his recital and a slow smile overspread his face. "When I got back to the bus," he continued, "a high school student said, 'Father, that is, what do you call it? . . . fastism?' I thought he was twisted up with Fascism so I said, 'what?' 'Fasticism,' he replied. 'Oh, I said, you mean fanaticism!' That was just what he meant too."

"Fanaticism is just zeal gone wrong," Edward said.

The older priest smiled. "In other words, we Catholic missionaries are zealous and other missionaries are fanatics," and his eyes twinkled mischievously.

Edward felt the blood run to his face. "No; I didn't mean to say that. I just meant that the world needs a more virile piety, the stuff that isn't afraid of a harsh means of penance on occasion, a piety that welcomes suffering."

"You sound like a Father of the desert after his annual retreat," the older missionary laughed.

"I don't mean to agree with this penance that advertises itself," he said seriously. "I do think, though, that there are in life desperate diseases that require desperate remedies, and that in the spiritual line sometimes a vital problem might find such extraordinary mortifications to be in order."

"Well," the other replied, "in that case you had better dig up a pair of sandpaper shoulder straps. You certainly have a desperate disease here," and he gestured toward the Aglipayano chapel across the plaza.

"They are persistent," Edward admitted.

"Their minister is like a nail. When he's in, he stays."

"But he's out."

"Out? What do you mean?"

"He had a quarrel with the people and left in a huff. They imported a new one from Manila."

"Glory be! Well, that's good news. But who is the new thorn in our side?"

"I don't know his name but the boys have nicknamed him 'Frogface' already."

"Pedrochel!" Father Gallagher exclaimed, sitting up in his chair excitedly. "You are in for a good time. As sure as there are leaves on banana trees you will receive a visitor very soon. A runt of a man, small but very terrible, a Catholic priest, Filipino, called Padre Pilapil."

"Terio told me about him one evening. He was in charge here after the revolution. This Pedroche was his pet aversion, was he not?"

"That's right. And it seems that our good Padre Pilapil has made it one of the main objectives of his life to be always on hand if Pedroche opens his mouth in public. Their en-

counters are folklore already among the people here."

"He will have to be mighty both in word and in work to down Pedroche, I think."

The older priest chuckled. "We all know Pedroche. Mouth like the Cave of the Winds, and when he opens up all the house lizards fall off the ceiling."

"That about describes him," Edward said.

"Padre Pilapil will lick him for all that. Just you watch. How long will you stay here, Father?"

"About six weeks more. Then I go to Manila. After three years at the Seminario I'm to get a chance at some real work. It seems the Superior has an appointment for me."

"Oho! So you're going to be a regular member of our ball league, eh?"

"I always wanted to. Teaching in the seminary was not what I wanted. I don't know, though, if I have what it takes for life on a mission station," he added dubiously.

"None of us has," confided the old missionary, suddenly serious. "You can't live this sort of life on sheer will power, noble ideals, courage, whatever you want to call it. American business houses in the Philippines pack every white man back to his homeland every three years. Why? The men can't stand it. And they have all the encouragement of good houses, servants, clean living conditions, a family life, congenial work, decent hours, a generous wage. My boy, if the Lord doesn't build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Don't forget that. How can we slog on at this job year in, year out? Because He backs us up. If He didn't, we'd strike out the first time at bat. Remember that old Vine and the Branch figure from the Gospel of St. John? Well, that's the whole secret of mission endeavor. Theory and practice in one. With Him you do things you alone couldn't do, things you don't want to do. Without Him nothing produces. And now that I have given you this dissertation on divine grace you can impart some to me by hearing my confession." The two priests went to the church.

A little later the visiting priest took his farewell. "I've got my Santo Entiero (Holy Burial — the figure of the dead Christ is carried in procession) procession coming off at three o'clock. Here comes my bus. Hasta Luego!" He waved his hand and was off.

Edward opened his sleep-heavy eyes and saw an accusing Terio.

He sat up abruptly. The afternoon had been busy with a thousand details. He had felt weak and had lain down for a nap. He looked at his watch. "No? Five o'clock!" The procession was due to start at this hour! He made a beeline for the sacristy.

"Much work," said the priest to the grimalkin-faced old sacristan, as he reached for the stole.

"Yes, Apo," the old servitor agreed.

"Life is hard," the priest murmured as he clasped the heavy black cope about his shoulders.

"But very much harder today for the Apo Dios," the good fellow replied simply.

Edward walked out into the sanctuary. The bustle of the procession was at its height. At various places in the church several floats were stationed. Some, with horizontal poles attached to them, were to be carried on the shoulders of men. Others, mounted on rickety sets of wheels or dismantled carts, were to be pushed. All of them were illuminated, mostly by lamps connected to a carbide tank beneath the float. The light produced was brilliant but the fumes of the escaping carbide were not aesthetic. Anesthetic, he thought, was the word.

The priest's position was behind the *pièce de resistance*, the sepulchered body of Christ. The corpus lay in a glass case attached to the top of a float that was pyramidal in form, the glass case forming the summit of the pyramid. Tiers of cheap glass lamp chimneys terraced the float. Within each lamp chimney was a candle.

The priest got away to a bad start. A knot of worshipers edged in between him and the float, and in a twinkling he was jammed in a throng and could not move. The float moved rapidly away from him. By dint of exceptional industry with elbow, knee, and foot, he wormed through the dense and devout throng and regained his original position.

The route lay over a typical set of Filipino village streets: cobblestones, boulders, patches of sand, and then stretches of loose gravel, pits, holes, refuse, and anything you can think of to render a road disagreeable.

Like a chariot in full career the float ricocheted, bounced, billowed, swayed, and surged onward. Beneath it, and between each pair of wheels walked a boy, hidden from view by a covering around the float's sides. Whenever the wheel encountered a difficult rock these boys heaved the obstacle aside, and the float staggered on without any noticeable loss of time.

Lights glowed along the entire route. The poorest hut, the smallest *nipa*-thatched shack managed to have one or two candles lit for the great event. Reverence and devotion marked the faces and attitudes of the sightseers. Fathers lifted up their wide-eyed little ones to give them a glimpse of the dead Saviour. Mothers drew children to their knees and uttered short prayers which the children repeated in low monotonous. Expressions of compassion were audible as the procession with its mournful memories of Calvary wound through the dusty streets.

One thing marred the occasion. Edward heard the people repeatedly remark *naaŋgin* (*very windy*). To the young priest the breeze was welcome; it saved him from collapsing beneath the weight and heat of the two-ply thickness of black cope he was wearing. But its unpleasant feature was that it kept persistently extinguishing all the candles on the float.

An elderly man, clad in black trousers and a stiffly laundered *barong Tagalog*, had taken it upon himself to keep the candles lit on the main float in spite of wind and weather.

Sweet patience! Gracious virtue! As fast as he finished relighting them, along came a gust of wind and snuffed them out again. Nothing perturbed, he patiently resumed his task. Occasionally his taper was extinguished along with the candle he was attempting to ignite, whereupon he reached over to the lee side of the float and by hook or by crook got the taper lit and then back again to his light-giving job.

At one spot in the road the procession halted for a few minutes. The man pushing the float took the occasion to pillow his head on the rim of the cart. It was a wonderful head; shaven as smooth as a Nazarite's and looking in the light of the lamps like a newly peeled hard-boiled egg. Just at that moment the candlelighter reached over the leaning man to relight one of the lamps. To insert its flame in the lamp chimney he upended his candle. At the precise instant the signal to start was given and the cart jumped forward, and the hot grease from the upended candle fell on the shining, shaven pate of the float pusher. The stricken man's reaction was instantaneous. Leaping backward he expressed himself vigorously about jackasses in general and about candlelighters in particular. He spoke in the vernacular and Edward did not understand everything he said, but the man's tones made it clear that it was not entirely in accord with the liturgy.

Stations, large booths of bamboo poles covered with gay-colored cloth and bunting, had been erected along the route. Within each such halting place statues borrowed from the people's homes were arranged along with cheap religious prints. From the ceiling were suspended *papayas*, melons, *cincomas*, fruits, and vegetables of every shape, hue, and color known to the region. This was to obtain the blessing of the *Santo Cristo* for the crops. Behind each station a choir of girls was hidden; as the procession went by they chanted mournful songs.

The band, led by the bass drum, marched behind the priest. It was so close on his heels that if he made a sudden

stop he was usually hit between his shoulder blades by the bass drum.

As the procession swung into the last lap of its course the paschal moon, a wondrous virgin white, rode over the top of the palm trees and painted rice fields and *nipa* huts. The air was heavy and soft. The wind died down to a gentle breeze. Doleful music came from the band, the floats ricocheted onward, lights flickered from windows; faces, goldened with light and lit up with devotion, peered out on the wavering line of brilliance. Onward the procession moved till in the distance loomed up the church towers and portals.

Terio had some rice, fish, and a cup of coffee waiting for the priest. He asked Terio the exact route of the procession. But the replies of the boy to his questioning only made the priest more confused. "Well, at least I think we crossed three major mountain ranges. There are blisters on my feet to bear out that statement; and I am certain of this — that en route, although I was visited by many distractions, I managed to say ten rosaries!"

"Berry big indulgence," Terio commented.

Late that night there were two sick calls up the mountain-side. When Edward returned to the rectory and lay down on his mat he was too weary to sleep. Looking out of his window he saw a few isolated lights gleaming in a hut here and there across the plaza, but the night was quite still. All alone, and off there at home. . . . He sharply corrected himself. He was always moaning about home. I have left it, he said, and the more I think of it the less shall I make this land my own. . . .

A week later he received the notice of his new appointment. Within a few days everything was ready. He went to the church for one last visit before leaving. As he prayed before the tabernacle, questions and doubts arose in his soul. "Was I wrong in pressing for another post, for the more difficult work of an out station? But if I have been so averse to the small sacrifices that the seminary work entails, what can

I do when the more exacting trials of rugged mission work are demanded of me?

“In any case, my desire is fulfilled. San Vicente, one of the most remote stations of the mission province of Lagan, is my post.”

Chapter 14

TERIO set the grip down and pulled the back of his right forearm across his brow to dislodge the perspiration. They had stopped at the edge of the roadway right near the ramshackle pier.

"Was it heavy, Terio?" the priest asked.

"No so, Faddaire."

"The other Father will be here at seven tonight. You will meet him, eh? At seven?"

"Yes, Faddaire."

"And you will take as good care of him as you have of me?"

The boy squirmed his bare right foot in the dust of the roadside and looked at the Padre. He liked this tall kind Padre, but the Superior away in Manila said he had to leave. It made him feel bad, like when he had stayed away from home the first time. A tall, thick-shouldered figure of a native clad in an open-necked black cassock came up the roadway. As he came abreast of them he cast a hurried haughty glance their way and stalked out onto the pier.

"That is the *pari-padi*, Faddaire."

"The one with the *soutana*?"

"Yes, Faddaire. But there is no collar. And he hab no hole in his head."

"Oh, no tonsure, you mean."

"Yes, Faddaire."

"Is he taking the boat too?"

"Yes, Faddaire. For Manila." The boy stretched forth his arm. "It is there."

Around a distant promontory moved a small interisland steamer, the sun gleaming on its white sides and polished railings, its funnel leaving a long plume of blackness in its wake. Before long it had felt its cautious way into the bay and was made fast alongside the wharf. The usual gang of barefooted, straw-sombreroed loafers clustered around the gangplank. A group of Manila-bound passengers formed a protective circle about their aggregation of bundles, baskets, *meletas* (wicker satchels), and belongings.

No sooner had the gangplank touched the pier than a thin-faced sallow little figure in a black cassock bounded ashore, his Roman style of clerical hat nearly coming off in the maneuver. He launched himself directly at the *pari-padi*.

"Aha, Mr. Pedroche!" he chortled dramatically, "we meet again, we meet again! And what are you doing here, if I may ask? Trying to spread some more of your foolishness, eh? The wolf in sheep's clothing is back in San Jacinto again, eh?" Like a bantam rooster he stood up to the amazed Pedroche. It takes nothing to gather a crowd in the Orient. Here was an event, an open challenge. A ring formed immediately.

"Faddaire," Terio said excitedly, "that little one . . . that is Padre Pilapil. Berry strong Romano. He always win that *pari-padi*."

Mr. Pedroche was upset by the appearance of a lifelong foe. His words lacked finesse. "Go back where you came from," he rasped in his loud voice, "you — you — you infallible little monkey."

"Aha! friends," said Father Pilapil turning to the attentive crowd, "you hear? He calls me infallible. Mr. Pedroche why do you, an Aglipayano, give me this great honor?"

"Monkey! You are Catolico Romano. Is not your Pope infallible?"

"We say the Pope is infallible, eh? You hear everybody? And what does that mean? You know, eh, Mr. Pedroche?"

"Most certainly I do," blustered the big man.

"Tell me then. I, and all these good people, would like to see if your brain is as big as your boasting. Maybe you are all smoke and no fire."

The crowd edged in closer. Taking a deep breath Mr. Pedroche prepared to launch into a vindication of his mental powers. Quick as a flash his diminutive opponent threw up an imperious hand.

"Wait!" he commanded. He whipped a small paper booklet from his cassock pocket and singling out a man and woman who had all the earmarks of a lawyer and a teacher he thrust the booklet into their keeping. "Here! This is the catecismo. You find in it the word infallibility. It tells what it means? Good. Now you can be judges and see if Mr. Pedroche knows what infallibility is."

The committee of two accepted the book. At once several people closed in around them and glued their eyes on the important definition. Mr. Pedroche exhaled slowly. His face grew red, his brow furrowed, and inarticulate sounds came from his throat. Never had he seen the inside of a Catholic catechism; if his statement did not coincide exactly with what was in the book the people would jeer him, and their scorn would not help his cause.

"Aha!" cut in the imperturbable little foe, sensing the man's distress, "your memory is old? Shall I help you? You have no answer?" he goaded. "Ah, then we must assume that your knowledge does not rise to the level of the little children in my catechism class." The crowd snickered. "They know what infallibility is. You do not. You do not have the knowledge of a child, nor the knowledge contained in a one centavo catecismo. Which proves what I have proved so often already, that you know nothing and are spending your life trying to teach it to people." He cast a pitying glance at the irate Mr. Pedroche. "You and your religion are ignorance."

The crowd's laughter broke the spell. Worst in words the big Mr. Pedroche had recourse to action, and here the little priest met his Waterloo. With a leap the big man seized his small foe. Fastening one hand quickly about the nape of his neck and grasping firmly with the other the seat of his cassock he propelled his victim toward the edge of the pier. In his eyes was the blazing determination to submit the issue to the ordeal of water. The crowd was taken unawares. Just as the priest was being swung into the air by his formidable opponent two brawny *cargadores* (longshoremen) rushed upon the aroused Mr. Pedroche and bore him and his victim back from the edge of the pier. The four figures fell in a heap on the ground. First to bounce to his feet was the little priest. Quickly he took hold of two bystanders and rushed down the street with them, chattering in the dialect as he left the scene.

Mr. Pedroche, worst in words and frustrated in deeds, was left victor on the field of strife, his ruffled pride assuaged by the swift retreat of his enemy. In a loud tone he followed up his advantage by berating the priest as a "monkey-faced, rice-eating, peace-destroying tick." And the next time he tried to engage him in a debate he would "throw him over a palm tree and what would remain of him the pigs could have." The steamer put an end to his tirade by emitting a strident wail from its siren. Edward, along with the rest of the passengers, hastened to store his parcels on board.

Terio's eyes were brimming as he said farewell. Fervently he kissed the priest's hand. Then the tears ran down his cheeks unrestrained. Like a lost soul he sidled down the gangplank. The deck hands began to prepare to cast off. But the steamer was not destined to leave on schedule. Down the street came a running figure, his black cassock billowing widely about him. Hearing his cries, the deck hands ceased their labors. A moment later the figure drew up alongside the gangplank. It was Father Pilapil. At his heels were two puffing policemen. Straight up the gangplank he led the

sun-helmeted minions of the law to where Mr. Pedroche was sprawled in a deck chair, enjoying a cigar.

"You are arrested," said a policeman to him, at the same time drawing a very businesslike club.

"Wha — what?" gasped Mr. Pedroche, almost swallowing his cigar.

"Assort and battery," proclaimed the other custodian of peace, mangling the English in his eagerness for an arrest.

As the steamer slowly drew away from the pier Edward watched a deflated Mr. Pedroche walking down the town's main street, flanked by his captors, while bringing up the rear was a procession of *cargadores* and townsfolk headed by little Padre Pilapil.

"Catholic Action, plus," Edward murmured. The sequel to the entire affair he was to learn some days later from a Manila newspaper. Mr. Pedroche received a thirty days' sentence for assault. The little Padre had scored again.

Book Three

Darkness in Dawn

Chapter 15

THOUGH the verdant islands of the Philippines have won for themselves the name of Seven Thousand Emeralds, they have, too, their season of russet and brown. It comes, not during the wane of the year, but in the midst of the hot season. The great lumpy hills are then burnt to a fiery red, to a light tan, or a dim ocher, and to stretches of wan yellow. Massive blobs of coloring on the palette of the Painter, they are changed by the rains of the wet season into a fragrant landscape of shaggy, running green.

As the bus crawled laboriously up the steeply curved inclines, Edward caught glimpses of this province wherein he was to work as a missionary. Dropping sheer away from the sides of the bus was a straight wall of sun-blasted thickets at the bottom of which lay a vast slumbering valley. The opposite side of the valley was a wall of bleak rock that seemed like a huge donjon keep. In the distance rose a summit of rock haloed with colored clouds. The young missionary loved the glory of mountains. His heart rose in gratitude that his lot was to be cast in such surroundings. Mountains, sky, and clouds! Puffs of white, sleeping on the rugged shoulders of some gray old giant of a mountain; tremendous wedges of white cumuli higher overhead. The bus passed a little waterfall hanging in a frame of fernlike bamboos; only the flight of a gaudy-plumed bird disturbed the picture of loveliness. Lagan might be a difficult province for the apostle of souls but it was a paradise for the lover of natural beauty.

When the bus had reached the top of a steep pass, the passengers saw far below, in a small hollow of the mountains, a cluster of houses. The driver looked at the priest, and gestured by a quick upward flick of his eyebrows. "Bañao," he said. Bañao was the capital of the province of Lagan, and the mission's central station was located here. Edward had heard much about Bañao's hospitable central station; for the past twenty-five years the mission life of the province had radiated forth from it. He could scarcely wait for the bus to come to a halt.

On his descent from the bus, two Fathers greeted him. The mission station was an agreeable surprise: a two-storied concrete edifice, corrugated-iron roof, cool verandas running around the house. This was practical, livable, even comfortable. But an hour's respite was all that was granted him. His chat with the missionaries was cut short abruptly. "There's a bus leaving soon for Pauig," announced the Mission Superior. "We have reserved a place for you in it. Father Miguel, your pastor, will be waiting for you at Pauig with horses. He will ride you in to San Vicente."

"Is it a long trip?"

"Two hours on horseback from Pauig. One river, the Alva. It's low now; the dry season, you know. Good luck and God bless you." He shook hands. "Father Miguel's a first-class missionary. Do what he tells you. Good-by."

"Good-by, Father," said Edward. A few minutes later he was musing to himself in the bus: "they move up here in spite of the heat. I am hardly arrived and I am on my way again. Well, a missionary is a worker, not an ornament."

At the terminus of the journey there was only one rider in evidence, a middle-aged Filipino, lounging astride a hardy-looking mountain pony. The man, sliding from his horse, handed Edward a letter; it was from Father Miguel, who had been called out on a viaticum case, and it said that the bearer, a catechist, would conduct him to San Vincente. The man led forward a sturdy pony for the priest's use.

"Very good *passo* (pace) this horse," vouchsafed the catechist, demonstrating the *passo*. With the reins, he pulled up the head of his mount; at once the horse took a rhythmic step that ran him along as smoothly as though he were in a rocker.

"I'll try it and see," the priest promised.

The guide took the missionary's satchel and affixed it to the pommel of his saddle. As Edward grasped the reins he noticed the steed cock its head to the left and take a squint at him from its left eye. "Hum," muttered the priest, who had never been astride a horse in his life, "that doesn't look so propitious." Working himself clumsily up and into the saddle, he tried the *passo*. It worked like a charm. For two hours they cantered along through aisles of lacy bamboos, worked up over a mountain crest and splashed through a stream. It was so pleasant that he lost his initial fear of the horse and began to talk with his guide.

But he soon paid for his rashness. In a rocky gully the horse was suddenly startled by a piece of paper fluttering from a scraggy bush. With one soul-shattering leap to the right, the frightened animal threw its rider on a pile of rocks and bolted down the road. Stiffly Edward rose and walked on down the defile. A lost stirrup was retrieved and then a bit of harness. Eventually he came up with his guide who had captured the startled pony. The Filipino made short work of fixing the stirrup and putting the riding gear into shape. Edward gingerly mounted his horse. Cautiously and without further mishap they journeyed onward.

The horses finally trotted them in sight of a cluster of huts. A long barnlike structure of wood, with a corrugated-iron roof was obviously the church of San Vicente, for a small bell tower dominated the front part of it and a cross surmounted its top. The two horsemen dismounted in a courtyard adjoining the building. A small Filipino boy hastened up to Edward, seized his satchel, kissed his hand, and led the way toward the rectory. Guided up a steep flight of wooden stairs, the priest found himself on a small veranda

with two doors opening onto it. Through one of these doors the boy staggered and deposited the satchel on the floor. "Padre Eduardo, here!" he sang out.

"My room?" he said.

"Yes, Faddaire."

"I am hungry, chico," he said.

The boy took hold of his hand and led him out on the veranda. A small table in the corner was graced with a dish of mangoes. The priest ate eagerly of the juicy fruit while the boy looked on. A clatter of hooves sounded in the courtyard. "Apooool!" roared out a stentorian voice.

"Ap-o-o-ol!" answered back the boy. "Father Miguel," he explained turning to the new assistant. In a moment a short, thick-set figure, clad in riding pants, puttees, and a black coat appeared on the veranda.

"Father Courtney?" he inquired, pulling off his sun helmet while he extended a powerful-looking hand.

"The same; and you are Father Miguel?"

"No other," he admitted with a smile. "Had a sick call and couldn't get there to meet you. The boy was there?"

"Yes, Father."

"Come into my room where we can have a talk without that little rascal hearing everything. That Ramon has ears as big as banana leaves. He can talk more than four full grown *lavanderas*" (washwomen). He led the way into the room alongside Edward's and pushed some articles of clothing from a chair.

"Sit down. I'll be back in a minute," he said. "When I heard of your appointment last month I brought up two bottles of light beer from Bañao. This is a celebration for me. How I have needed a helper! My, you are big and strong, Father. I hope you'll like the work here."

Left to himself, Father Courtney looked critically about this room of a man whom the Mission Superior had termed a first-class missionary. It boasted no elegances. It was a simple workman's disordered sleeping room. An upended box be-

hind the door had a mop of disheveled clothes on top of it; they straggled and drooped down its sides like the uncombed strands of some wild creature's hair. Rubbing elbows with it was a dusty prie-dieu, scattered on top of which were a clothesbrush, the two altar cruets, one with its spout broken off, a cloth bag, and some loose papers. To the right stood a sturdy but untidy table, its surface a potpourri of unripened mangoes, a feverishly ticking alarm clock, a milk tin, and a bundle of crumpled newspapers. A wardrobe with its legs set securely in sardine cans, filled with kerosine, flanked one side of the room; empty tins without number crowned its summit, while rusted tools, saddle pads, and other mysteries of horse gear cluttered up the space beneath. The content of the wardrobe's interior was guarded by a sturdy-looking padlock. The bed was a tumble of dirty linen on top of which lay a grimy old crazy quilt; four black, muddied, hole-perforated socks drooped dejectedly over the head of the bed. Beneath the bed lay shoes, slippers, and several books which apparently lay where they had been thrown. Near the bed was a tool chest, some bags of nails, and a box of mouse-nibbled soap. A litter of broken shoelaces, paper, and strings was strewn about the floor. On the walls hung a water canteen, a crucifix, and some dusty prints of the Blessed Virgin and the Guardian Angel.

Edward gazed at this mess and wondered what sort of man would this be to live with and work with, day in, day out. He knew that missionaries lead a helter-skelter sort of existence, some of them being actually nomads with their main station an occasional stopping place. Their lives are full of comings and goings. Their days and nights are replete with the worries and struggles of soul saving so that their dwellings are prone to be more negligent than nice.

A mighty "cock-a-doodle-doo!" shattered his musings. Lo, upon the bedstead was perched a proud rooster saluting in joy his beloved Pastor who had just re-entered the room. "Out!" shouted the priest and shooed him out. "Some old

saxophone, eh?" grinned the missionary, depositing two glasses and two bottles on the floor.

"He knows his scales," Edward agreed. "Are these your diggings?"

"Yes, Father," replied the other, busying himself with the bottles, "this is home. I know what you are thinking. Looks like a waterspout has passed through it, but I want to tell you that after three weeks on the pike, in the trails and the mud, you come back here and it looks good, very good."

"Be it ever so humble," Edward murmured.

"You can put your last dollar down on that," assented his pastor, handing him a foaming glass. "Here's to happy days and health!"

They drank. "When you are chasing souls out here you can't spend time trimming your mantlepice. We need helpers, missionary Sisters, societies, and altar confraternities, and such like to take care of us and of the church, just like at home, but we can't have that all at once. It comes in time, after I am dead. A hundred years or so hence there will be plenty of that sort of thing for those who come after us. We are the sowers. Somebody else will reap." Grinning contentedly he emptied his glass. "You probably think," he went on, "that I could at least find some time to tidy up. Well, my days are all prayer and work, work and prayer. The souls are such an important item that one gradually forgets the frills."

"I think I can understand that, Father," Edward said. He could imagine how this priest, when he first came to work, may have been a man with a passion for nice things and for cleanliness; in the moil of missionary labor all that had been sacrificed.

"You're not going to have much of a chance for getting homesick here," Father Miguel said abruptly. "I've got a job for you already."

"Delighted," the other exclaimed.

"Can you ride?"

Edward shifted uneasily in his seat.

"Well, to tell the truth, no. I am city bred. The ride up today was the first time in my life that I sat on a horse." He recounted his sudden spill. Father Miguel laughed.

"You'll soon get over that up here. The saddle is home for you most of the year round. I am not American, you know. I am Austrian. I had a dose of cavalry service during the war. After it was all over I finished my theology in the United States."

"You speak English well."

"Not so well any more. I've been here twelve years without sight of a city or a confrere except for the monthly visit to Bañao, the central station. I've gotten so I think and pray in dialect." He paused a while at some memory. "What part of the States do you come from?" he asked.

"New York City."

"Good. There's a district in the mountains I want you to ride through next week. Today is Thursday. We will leave on Monday morning. You can practice horseback riding every day. Tinto is the name of your horse. I'll help you. The occasion of this trip is this. For two years I have worked in this section of the mountains with a pair of catechists and we have had fine results. The Filipinos, you know, think rather much of your country and have been modeling their lives and their government along its lines. Some fellows have been spreading rumors among them. I want them to see that there really is such a thing as an American Catholic priest."

"Why, that will be a real pleasure, Father. Will I have to speak to them?"

"Just get together some facts and figures about the Catholic Church in the United States. We can translate them for you. The people will be glad to listen to you."

"I'll do that. How long will the trip last?" Edward added as an afterthought.

"Well, this is the smallest of my five districts but it takes

a week to get to the last village in the district. It will be hard for you. We rough it."

"I'll not mind that."

"Good fellow," encouraged the older missionary, manifestly pleased at his new helper's eagerness. "And here is Ramon. What? Good. The fatted chicken is slain."

At a substantial meal Edward had his first introduction to Father Miguel's stupendous appetite. Then the two missionaries went to the church and made a brief visit to the Blessed Sacrament. On the veranda they bade each other good night. Edward could hear his new superior tumble into bed and soon after the heavy breathing of slumber. He undressed stiffly and got under his mosquito net.

Tired though he was, he could not sleep. After nearly an hour's tossing about, he arose and went to the large window of his room. Leaning his arms on the sill, he looked up at the blue dome of the sky, now flecked with thousands of stars. He was filled with a vague unrest, with an oppressive feeling of his own struggle. What could he do, he who was so helpless? And then his feelings welled up into words. Kneeling at the window he gave himself up to prayer.

Chapter 16

FATHER MIGUEL, booted and armed, gave Edward his first lesson in riding. "You know nothing at all about this?" he inquired as a preliminary.

"Father," declared his pupil solemnly, "I am as innocent of horse knowledge as a newly skinned egg is of hair." The instructor laughed. "Just what is the correct way to mount?" Edward asked.

"That is the easiest part — to get up. To stay there is harder," vouchsafed Father Miguel. "You place your left foot in the left stirrup — so — and your left hand on the pommel of the saddle — so — and then you swing your right leg up and over the back of the horse and you land right in the saddle — so."

Edward had watched all his instructor's maneuvers and then let fly with his right foot. He landed neatly in the saddle but, unfortunately, the affair did not end there. He kept right on going. The impetus of his swing carried him over and he fell in a heap on the other side of the horse.

"Oho!" Father Miguel cried out. "That is too much. You are like Lindbergh — you cross over in one hop, eh?" and he chuckled good-naturedly.

Edward scrambled to his feet, his face rather red. *Festina lente!* "Make haste slowly," counseled his mentor.

"That means 'take it easy, McCarthy.'" He climbed up his horse's left side as carefully as a mountain climber going

up Mount Everest. The pair then jogged off for a short ride. Edward was continually reminded of the fact that he was astride a horse. At frequent and unexpected intervals the creature's bony vertebrae kept coming up to hit him. He complained of this to Father Miguel. "Grip him strongly with your knees," he instructed. "So . . ." he demonstrated. "Keep only the front part of the foot in the stirrups," he cautioned as Edward planted his arches in the stirrups.

"Why that?"

"That is very important," the other replied. "In the mountains and crossing rivers the horse sometimes falls. If the foot sticks in the stirrup you get dragged. Then you break your neck."

For a half-hour Edward clamped his horse's side until he had cramps from toenails to belt buckle. With a sigh of relief he slipped from the saddle in front of the rectory.

"Talk about chiropractors," he complained. "Go ride a mountain pony!"

The veteran missionary laughed. "It is better than a Swedish movement, heh? Don't mind that stiffness. That goes away after a day. Come inside and rest." The houseboy took the horses and the priests entered the house.

"You will learn quickly," Father Miguel remarked. "You are not so stiff in your movements. Padre Lorenzo was here to visit me once. He had always kept a school bench warm. I gave him some lessons in riding the horse but he was slow to learn. One day when I was absent a sick call came. It was at the end of the town; that is far because this town is like a county. So Lorenzo has the boy put the saddle on his horse and then he hurries to the church for the Viaticum. You have seen how the priests go on sick calls here? You did sick calls yourself in Santo Espiritu? Good, then you know — it is Spanish style. He has surplice, stole, and veil and he carries the Blessed Sacrament in a large burse."

"Yes; and what it makes for in solemnity," Edward commented, "is lost in perspiration."

"That's right! Well, Lorenzo, in vestments, gets on the horse's back. Through the middle of the town he goes, like one of those Canterbury Pilgrims. Just in the middle of the plaza his pony catapults him into the air. He finds himself sitting in the center of the road, still clutching the veil tightly, but all the rest of the liturgical robes are flounced around him. He looks like a big moth with broken wings."

"I'll bet he had uncharitable thoughts about that horse."

"That was just the tragedy," went on the older priest. "Carrying the Blessed Sacrament he had to be reverential. Some boys caught the horse for him. He got in the saddle again but he told me he felt like he was straddling Mount Vesuvius. But that horse rode him all the rest of the way like a lamb."

All that day and the next, Edward practiced straddling a chair and clamping his knees against it. With a confident heart he answered an invitation for a little jog.

"All ready?" Father Miguel inquired after he mounted.

"Ready," was the brisk reply and he swung aloft. Smoothly the movement was executed and smoothly he landed in the saddle, but then he felt things slipping. At once he applied pressure with his knees, powerful pressure, but all in vain. One moment he was glued faithfully to the saddle, the next he was on an angle, and finally he was under the horse's belly still doggedly clamped to the saddle. At that stage he and the saddle parted company.

Father Miguel, who had started his steed, whirled abruptly at Ramon's yell and quickly took in the situation. He spurred to Tinto's head and held the horse steady while Edward crawled out from under the horse, his face a violent claret color.

"Hurt?" Father Miguel asked anxiously.

"There are lots of spots in front of me. But that's just from looking at the whole world turned upside down."

Father Miguel turned to Ramon. "You rascal," he scolded, "can't you tie a saddle girth correctly yet?"

"Oh, he's innocent," Edward interjected. "I insisted on tying them myself. I guess I went at it too gently," he added ruefully.

Father Miguel adjusted the other's saddle and drew the cinches tight. "There, that won't slip," he declared. The pair rode forth without any further mishap.

Another ride on the ensuing day found Edward a little more at home in the saddle. "You're getting the hang of it," his tutor announced. "We start our trip tomorrow and you will learn the rest as we go along." Edward did not feel quite so confident about that. He would have liked a few more weeks of practice. Recalling one of Father Harrison's maxims for the mission: "Do the best with what you've got," he accepted the other's decision without a protest.

The next morning Edward caught a glimpse of the many-sided character that goes to make up a first-class missionary. In the cool of dawn his pastor was stamping energetically about, calling crisp commands to the boys, packing saddle bags, giving curt instructions to a catechist about how certain affairs were to be handled in his absence.

His bustle of activity was suddenly interrupted. A group of wild, bronzed fellows came padding into the courtyard, a litter swaying rhythmically with their steps. It bore a *capi-tán's* son who had broken his leg in a fall. Edward came down from the veranda in time to see Father Miguel put the finishing touches to a crude bonesetting. The old priest patted the boy's head gently and then administered a sleeping draught. Then he hastened in to the church for his Mass.

Fifteen minutes later, Edward entered the church. The older missionary was already at the altar. As Edward began to make his way forward toward the sanctuary the two altar boys suddenly jumped up and ran into the sacristy yelling: "Snake! Snake!" Like one wave the people about the altar came to their feet and drew back. Edward pushed through them hurriedly and reached the sanctuary. On the lower step of the altar he saw a coiled rice snake, a poisonous,

bright-green reptile. Slowly unwinding itself it began to weave sinuously upward. The veteran missionary at the altar had turned to meet the snake. With steady hand he pulled off his chasuble, took hold of an iron candlestick, descended the altar steps to the side, circled, and coming up behind the snake smashed it out of existence with one blow of the candlestick. Tossing the mess aside with the tip of the candlestick, he ascended the altar, replaced the candlestick, resumed the vestment and continued the Mass. Later on he said: "It wasn't exactly liturgical, but there are lots of things about which Wappelhorst* says nothing."

* Author of a Book on Liturgy.

Chapter 17

THEY took the Tipucan trail on a bright Monday morning, four good men and true. Father Miguel sat astride a bronco of a dirty-white color, moth-eaten and bony from the wear and tear of the mission trail. Max was its name. Its back was marked by the scars of old saddle sores, but it had plenty of gunpowder yet in its system. At his side rode Edward, his black mount Tinto fresh and eager.

"Who are the two behind us?" he asked, indicating the two Filipinos astride a pair of shaggy ponies. "Catechists?"

Father Miguel nodded. "The two best in the province. The one with the black *barong tagalog* is Aventino. That is a real man. An orator, clever with finger tricks, and he knows the people."

Edward turned in the saddle to get a better look at the man, a rather well-built native, sitting on his horse with that easy nonchalance that only long hours astride can give. His light-brown features were all animation as he chatted with his companion and his eyes became networked with wrinkles as he laughed. "He wins the people," Father Miguel said. "I don't know how he does it. They call him the Maestro. One time I congratulated him on some very good work in one of the villages and he laughed. "The Holy Ghost did it," he said, "because I prayed to Him."

"He knows some English?"

"Just some bamboo English. He's had only a few years of

intermediate school in Bañao. You must practice speaking dialect with him. The other catechist is a high school graduate. His name is Pablo."

"Frail sort of chap," Edward commented after a glance at the small figure at Aventino's side.

"That is the trouble with Pablo. Always like a fire. Seven years now he is with me on the mission. He goes through typhoons and heat and rain. This life in the mountains, skipping from one district to another in heat and rain, is not easy. It gives Pablo trouble with his breathing. I don't know what it is, asthma or bronchitis. After we are out in the mountains he will start to cough again. But he goes through. That little fellow is a mixture of asthma and apostolic brimstone."

They had cleared the town. Father Miguel signaled Aventino. At once the catechist kicked his horse in the side and rode forward to take the lead. "Here's where we hop off," the older priest explained. "Aventino always leads. He knows every trail in the mountains like the palm of his hand."

The pace at once quickened. For four hours their ponies scrambled up narrow trails, slid and stumbled down over loose rubbles of rocks and debris, picked their way through streams swishing deep with the advance guard of the rains. At the first stream Father Miguel gave a curt word of advice to the neophyte. "Follow Aventino and let the horse have his head." Edward had a qualm of fear as his horse entered the river. Time and again Tinto slipped, stumbled, but always managed to regain his footing; the horse finally emerged on the opposite bank, with his rider soaked up to the waist.

Nine times during the forenoon the missionaries had to let their horses pussyfoot across rivers. In the meantime the sun's tropic rays were making Edward uncomfortable. "Say," he called out to Father Miguel, "my feet are nice and cool from all the river riding but my brains are being barbecued in this sun helmet."

Father Miguel laughed. "Just a few minutes more and

then we have a nice stretch — no sun," he called back.

The prediction was fulfilled in the tree-shaded coolness of the mountain passes. Through silent aisles of greenery, through alleyways of bamboo they thudded, no one talking. Birds of golden yellow or startling red and green flashed across their vision.

Each rider hung low over his steed's neck and went swiftly forward. Bamboo whips drove at their helmets, tore at their clothes, scratched their necks and persistently tried to put their eyes out. Gradually the bamboos thinned out. In an open spot Pablo stood up in his stirrups and emitted a long-drawn, grisly howl. From far off, like an echo, his call was twice repeated. At once Edward's three companions urged their mounts forward. Rounding a bend they saw below them the river, and on its opposite bank a group of gleaming, bronze Tipucan warriors. The natives splashed hastily across the stream and quickly approached them, kissed the hands of the priests, aided them to dismount and to unsaddle the horses. Edward's eyes were busy appraising them. Finely formed fellows, wearing only a clout, with their bolos in a sheath at their side.

"How do you feel?" Father Miguel asked.

"Bilgy in the boots, and stiff as a poker starched seven times seven," Edward sang back.

"Get your shoes and puttees off and dry them out," Father Miguel ordered.

Edward sat down on the ground, unscrewed his water-soaked footwear and hung them on a tree. He removed his helmet and sought the shade of a near-by palm. Father Miguel dropped down beside him and pulled off his sweat-drenched coat.

"These men are a group of Catholics from our first village, Laban," the pastor said. "Aventino's their catechist. He told them we were coming and that they should be here and have food.

"A thoughtful man, I see," the young priest remarked.

"It's going to be fish and rice, of course," Father Miguel went on, his mind still on the lunch. "They caught the fish early this morning. See, the boys are scaling them with pieces of wood. Those other ones, over there, are fixing up the breaks in the nets."

"What are those men stuffing into the bamboo tubes?" Edward queried with sudden interest. "Looks like rice."

"Rice it is," nodded his companion. "I guess you never saw that before, eh? They close up the ends of those hollow green bamboos with leaves and then set them over the fire to cook."

At that moment an elderly Tipucan, whose hair, as long as a woman's, was wound about his head and held in place by a band of cloth, approached the two priests. In his outstretched hand he held a coconut shell cup. Father Miguel took the proffered shell, saluted each of the elders by name, took a mighty swig and then handed it to Edward. The young priest examined its contents. It was half-filled with what looked like muddy water.

"What is it?" he whispered to his companion.

"*Basi* . . . native wine . . . drink some, or they will be offended," he ordered shortly.

Edward opened his mouth, closed his eyes and tilted the shell. The ancient Tipucan took the shell and the priest managed a grateful smile. The Tipucan went toward the catechists. Father Miguel was grinning.

"How did you like it, Father Edward?"

"It tasted like a punch in the eye."

"Yes; it is bitterish. But it warms you. After getting wet in the rivers as we do always, it keeps the fever away. That's what you need," the other chuckled contentedly. "There is a longer and harder ride ahead of you this afternoon."

After the flowing bowl had made the rounds, Father Miguel arose to speak. He was in his shirt and bare feet, but no one stands on ceremony in the mountains, and he spoke as simply and unaffectedly as though in full pontificals. He told them

among other things that he had brought with him an American Catholic priest who was going to tell them all about the Catholic Church in America. At once the natives were interested and broke out into questions. Father Miguel speedily waved them aside by pointing to clouds that were beginning to bank up ominously.

Quickly the bamboo tubes were taken from the fire, split, and their snow-white contents dumped on a big banana leaf placed on the ground. Fish and rice were handled by fingers in lieu of knives and forks. Hastily the meal was concluded and the missionaries mounted, but the rain was on them before they started. Just before the cataract broke loose, Edward took out his raincoat from his saddle bags and got into it. Off through the pouring rain they went, the Tipucans gliding away on foot by another route. Edward drew up alongside Father Miguel. "Do you think this will keep up long?" he queried, the water cascading from his helmet. Father Miguel, enveloped in a big wrap of airtight canvas, grinned as the sweat poured down his face along with the rain. "This is the start of the rainy season," he rejoined. "Every day it is nice in the morning, and every day in the afternoon it rains. Some weeks it goes like that; then the real rain comes."

"So, there's no hope of a letup this afternoon?" the young priest said, looking at his legs all soaked with the rain.

"None. You will see plenty of water this afternoon."

That afternoon's ride was Edward's introduction to the physical discomforts of the missionary's life. Their trail was a narrow file that meandered up mountains and around precipices. Their horses slipped in the mud, lurched, and stumbled on. The rain pelted them mercilessly and dripped down their collars and soaked their legs. The heat was intense. For hours they continued to slop through mud and rain, oftentimes a step from death as their ponies madly dug in their hooves for a foothold on some declivity. No one spoke. Edward was filled with a sense of physical discomfort.

The heat, the perspiration, the dank sweaty smell from his laboring horse, his aching knees and muscles, the vast unfriendliness of the hammering rain, the serpentine ooze of the trail, the hollowing valleys below. What was the sense of going through all this? A group of useless, mountain-hid natives that would never mean anything for the world's betterment. No; he mustn't think that way. There were souls at the end of this trail. Sure, the going was tough, but then this was what he had wanted. All hill climbing was tough.

Mechanically the priest guided his dripping horse, his weight shifting with its jolting progress; but his mind was busied with a thought from his morning's meditation. Our Saviour made Himself one with those whom He redeemed, and at the same time He was one with God. He was at once the offerer and the offered. Edward's mind played with the thought, pursuing all its implications.

"Union with the people," he muttered. "One with them in thought, language, and needs. Sympathetic to their dark lot, their longings, and eager to substitute myself for their sins and failures. I must be victim as well as priest, ready to lay down my own life that these souls be saved."

Father Miguel and the catechists suddenly whirled in their saddles. The young priest, bringing up the rear, was singing! His voice rose strongly and happily as his horse jolted down over the loose rocks and slid over the mud. For the next hour Edward sang all the songs and snatches of songs he could remember. Aventino at a broadening of the trail drew closer to Father Miguel. "It is good, Apo. The young Padre is glad. Even in the rain."

"Yes, I am glad to see that," the veteran said.

It was dark when the four men plodded up steep terraces, leading their horses into the town of Laban. The Tipucans usually build on the mountainsides, clustering their huts together in terraces. Thickets of thorns and hedges of brambles fence in the terraces. As a rule, only one narrow way provides access to the village. As they approached the

village, Aventino shouted loudly, declaring their identity and the purpose of their visit. Voices answered him from out the darkness.

The gate was standing open for them. Drearily they slopped their way up the terraces till they came to a leveled spot. Aventino led their horses away in the gloom. Father Miguel called reminders after him about supper, and bedding and fire. "Got your bags, Father Edward?" he asked his companion.

"Yes, Father. Where do we go from here?" he asked, the misery of mud, sweat-soaked, rain-drenched clothes heavy on him.

"Follow me," the other ordered. After some more sloppy navigation he stopped and held open what must have been a door. Edward kept close to his heels. A minute later a young Tipucan came running with a flaring torch in one hand; in the other hand he carried some things which the Maestro had sent. Father Miguel took the things, and by the light of the torch screwed them together. Then he took a match from a waterproof box and lit a carbide lamp. Two more boys staggered in with a box.

"First thing to do is to change," Father Miguel said.

"Let the boys have your wet things," added Father Miguel, "Aventino is making a fire and will dry them out for you."

"Is he going to cook something?" Edward asked as he handed his sopping shoes and wet garments to the boy.

"He is doing that already," Father Miguel stated. "Bring your breviary over here by the light and finish it before they bring the food. You're tired."

Edward dug his breviary out of the saddle bags. "Say, Father, whose house is this?" he asked.

"House?" snorted the other. "This is the House of God."

"Your chapel?"

"Laban's one and only. It is roofed with grass, and the walls as you see are woven *sawali* with big openings for fresh air."

The young priest gazed at the big gaps in the walls. "Don't you have any furniture?" he queried.

"Well, there's this table," the missionary answered. "It has the falling sickness in all four legs, but a table it is." He placed the carbide lamp upon the table and drew a pair of wooden stumps forward, "and here are the armchairs." He laughed quietly. Both of them sat down and opened their breviaries. Moths and numerous small-winged insects of the night blundered about the carbide's dazzling radiance. The rain dropped softly on the roof.

Aventino, trailing a swarm of little Tipucans, interrupted their devotions with supper. He brought the tin dishes in and set them on the table.

"This pot of ink," Father Miguel explained, laying aside his breviary and pointing, "is coffee." Edward held out his tin cup. "This hatful of boiled green shoelaces," he went on, "is *sida* (vegetables)."

"And that," the other broken in, "is the rice. Please, no lectures on domestic science, Father Miguel," he urged. "Let's eat."

Father Miguel ladled out their victuals. As the priests ate their frugal meal, little Tipucans of all ages, sizes, and states of shyness grouped about them. The children's eyes were big with questions, but they looked like a flight of dusty cherubs from some rare old painting. The meal completed, Aventino left the hut with all the dishes in his arms and all the children at his heels. The two priests could hear the youngsters outside popping questions to the Maestro about the two Fathers.

The older priest dragged out a cumbersome piece of furniture from near the wall. It looked like a gridiron. "This is a bed. I mean, it was a bed many years ago. Help me pull it over there in your corner." The two Fathers adjusted it. "Now you get in there and sleep," he said to Father Courtney.

"But where's your bed," the other objected.

The old priest tapped the ground with his foot. "That's my couch." He threw up his hand peremptorily. "No arguing. I am older, yes. But also I am tougher and used to this. You will need all your strength before we get through this trip. Get in."

Obediently the young priest took a blanket and spread it on the bed. He rolled up his shirt and put his breviary beneath it for a pillow. Just then he heard a noise near the door. Five Tipucan boys, as straight as arrows, each with an old shaggy blanket swathed about him stalked in solemnly and looked at the Fathers. Father Miguel, seated again at the table with his breviary open, glanced up at them and muttered something. The little fellows closed up the opening of the hut with a big piece of plaited *sawali*; lining up on the ground before the entrance, they started dropping off quietly to sleep, one after the other.

Edward now broke in on Father Miguel's devotions. "Excuse me, Father, but are these boys also going to sleep in our house, I mean, our church, tonight?"

"An old tribal custom," the other explained, lifting his eyes from his breviary. "They want the guest to feel sure that he is safe, so a group of warriors sleeps across the entrance. No enemy can enter without disturbing them. They will defend the guest with their lives."

"That's nice," Edward murmured. "Can be sure of waking in the morning with my head on my shoulders."

"I baptized all these boys a few months ago. They are proud to do this for me." Father Miguel's eyes, heavy with sleep, turned back to the breviary. The young priest knelt for a moment at his bedside for a prayer to his Blessed Mother. One little head rolled over on the floor and looked up at the strange sight of the priest on his knees. "Yes; I am still here, chief," smiled Father Courtney as he rolled onto his rattan gridiron, mistakenly called a bed. He was too tired to take the bed's census. Later in the night he turned and his head slipped from his improvised pillow. He saw his com-

panion still at the table, his outflung arm still grasping the breviary but his tired head pillowed on the table in sleep. The lamp was very low. It had been a hard day. He realized that this day had been but a slight sample of the trail's hardship. He had many such days, many years of them, to face. Fears closed in on him. Tiredly he slipped from the uncomfortable bed to his knees. "Give me Your love, O Sacred Heart," he pleaded. "Your love makes everything easy. I need this thin flame of devotion to You to be a consuming flame, a fire that consumes all the dross of personal weakness. I want to love You, Sacred Heart, more and more. . . ."

Chapter 18

BEFORE dawn the missionaries were up and busy. Edward's shoes had been left toasting over the fire for the whole night; the smoke and the heat had drawn all the moisture out of them but had caused the shoe's size to diminish. He squirmed his protesting feet into the shrunken shoes. "Feels like a cow pulling on a pair of dancing pumps," he said ruefully.

"Yes; they were over the fire too long," was the indifferent reply.

The two priests prepared the table which was to serve as an altar. A gaudy vermilion paper print of the Holy Ghost pasted on cardboard and a crucifix made up the church fixings. "Aventino has the rest of the things in a box in one of the huts," the missionary explained. "He will be here soon. You can go down to the river and wash now. I must send runners out to all the outlying hamlets, so the baptized ones can come for the Mass."

The rain had stopped but the ground was still sodden. The cold water of the mountain stream was good to feel. When Edward had finished his ablutions, dawn was on the mountains. He forgot his stiffness and his pinching shoes. Eagerly he retraced his way to the grass-roofed chapel.

In the course of the next half-hour wild halloos broke forth now and again from the mountainside and were answered by the people of Laban. It was the outlying Catholics

coming in for Mass. Finally the runners themselves returned, the congregation packed into the chapel, and the Sacrifice of the Mass was begun. As Edward gazed around at the appointments his heart was touched by a deep and moving realization of the infiniteness of God's love and generosity. God had put His omnipotence in bonds. When the priest can call Him down to earth He comes, no matter how miserable the hovel or how rude the adorer. "Truly," thought the young missionary, as he looked at the dirt floor, the wattled walls, the rickety table, "in the Highest all things unite, even the lowest. Only a God could be so humble as to hold court in such a place."

The Mass moved slowly to its completion. Edward then donned the vestments and began the Holy Sacrifice. In the midst of the sacred action, however, he was distracted by a dog that sneaked in through one of the openings in the wall and kept caracoling about his feet. The natives paid no heed to this intruder, but the priest could not keep his thoughts on the missal. He signaled his distress to Aventino, serving as altar boy. The zeal of the Lord's house suddenly ignited the soul of the Maestro; with one tremendous kick he lifted the dog in a yelping arc that ended some feet way. The dog skulked off.

After Mass, those of the catechumens who were sufficiently instructed were lined up for baptism. While Edward was performing each phase of the ceremonies, Father Miguel explained to the assembled natives the symbolism of what was being done. The respect and reverent attention of this primitive people astonished the young priest; he had not thought that the deep symbolism of the ritual would mean so much to these wild children of the mountain.

Among those to be baptized was a slender gray-headed old man, the *Capitán* or headman of the village. Despite his age he had gone to Aventino and had learned the truths of the faith; finally he had asked for Baptism. His hair was neatly trimmed; a sign that he was leaving the customs of his

forbears, for the Tipucans wear their hair long and coiled up about their heads. Edward baptized the *Capitán* with the name of "Edward," because as he later explained, he too was a king.

Father Miguel's watch showed eleven o'clock when the baptisms were finished. Both priests were perspiring freely. They removed their vestments. "Aventino will pack everything," said Father Miguel, mopping his brow, "we ought to start now, but the ladies want to show you their jewelry," he said in a patient tone of voice.

"Jewelry?" was the amazed reply.

"Sure. Come and see it." He stopped. "Better take some cigars and *carmelitos* (candy) along. They will ask for them."

The priest filled his pockets and as they stepped forth from the hut Father Miguel exclaimed: "Why, they are here already!"

Three young girls had just come up. "I'll talk to them."

While Father Miguel chatted with them the young priest had a chance to examine the Tipucan beads. The girls had some strands of them looped through their hair, and sleevelets of them completely covering their forearms. One of the girls removed a rope of beads from her hair and gave it to Father Miguel who passed it on to Edward for inspection.

"They look pretty enough," the young missionary commented as he fingered the rough stones, "and there are certainly different varieties aplenty."

"Most of those beads are heirlooms. They hand them down from mother to daughter for generations," Father Miguel explained.

"Gaudy yellows, gleaming black, brickish red, and this strange brownish ground color with circlets of white running through it," Edward enumerated.

"All real stones," the older missionary asserted. "No glass."

"Aren't those bead sleevelets a bothersome piece of jewelry?" The young priest was pointing to the beads that completely covered the girl's forearms.

"They are," the other agreed. "But then you must suffer, you know, in order to be beautiful. Look!" He pointed to the wrist of a girl. "Here's where they start. They wind the first loop so tight that the flesh swells. Strand after strand of beads are wrapped about the arm until the whole forearm is covered. They insert strips of bamboo underneath the beads. If the irritation and pain caused by the tightness becomes too great they pull out the strips of bamboo and that relieves it."

"Don't they ever remove these things?"

"Sometimes. To renew the string or to go in mourning for a dead relative."

"It must ruin their arms."

"Oh, they tattoo a delicate network of blue lines on the skin of the arm," the older priest hastened to explain. "Then the arm does not look white and unsightly when the beads are removed. I've seen them doing that tattooing," he went on, "I tell you, it is painful. They pierce the skin, and into the wound rub the tattoo mixture, a compound of the ashes of blue cloth and oil."

The sun was brutally hot when the missionaries finally swung into the saddle and started picking their way down the terraces to the trail. They had just about cleared the village when there was a shrill boyish shout behind them. "Apo! Apo!" the men stopped their horses and turned to see what was wrong. Two little Tipucans, bronze and straight backed, their sarongs flying wildly about them as they ran, came up to them. Aventino spoke to them. "What is it?" he asked with a slight frown of worry. They dug their toes into the ground for a minute or two. Then one of them launched forth into speech. He had in his hand an egg. It was a good egg, laid by the chicken that morning. Apo Eduardo had given many presents that morning so he would give him a present of the egg. And at once the other lad, less agile of tongue but not less generous of heart, thrust forward a bamboo stick to which a little bird was attached by a string.

"And this is for Apo Eduardo, too?" the catechist asked.

The boy nodded. The catechist held them out to the young priest, who took them, reached down from his horse, and patted the children's heads. Aventino dug another medal for each out of his saddle bags. The boys kissed the priest's hand. Then at Father Miguel's command the horses started forward again.

"They like you berry much, Apo," Aventino said.

"The egg is for your dinner, Maestro," Edward said handing it to him, "and the bird . . ." he looked at it. A dainty fluff of feathers, gaudy colored of wing and frightened of eye. It made frantic attempts to escape. They were coming into the trail again and were in the region of the mountains and the streams. All about him the young priest saw everything green and gay and free, and there on a little bamboo stick his gay-plumaged bird was miserably fighting his heart out. He untied the string from the bird's foot. "Fly off, little fellow, you belong with the mountains and arching sky. My little friend of Laban might be angry at what I've done, but his gift to me was not the bird."

Late in the evening the missionaries arrived at Lianga, a cluster of huts set in a grove of coconut palms. On all sides of it stretched paddies with lush green rice.

As the quartet Indian-filed into the grove of palms, Aventino raised his salutatory shout. At once voices shouted back from several huts. Bamboo shutters were pushed back. Like a town crier, Aventino began telling the news. "An American priest is here. A meeting tonight at the *Capitán's* house."

"In five minutes everyone in the village knows," Father Miguel said to his companion.

Aventino turned his horse and led them to the *Capitán's* dwelling where they were to be bedded for the night. A boy took care of their horses. Aventino began to talk rapidly to him. The boy gesticulated. As Edward passed the pair he noticed, that a large goiter disfigured the boy's otherwise well-knit body.

"He can't speak, that boy —" Father Miguel observed.

"Is that why Aventino is so friendly to him?"

"That's right. Anything that is weak, or sick, or loose in the head gets special attention from Aventino. God be blessed for that catechist, I say many times. In some ways he is better than a priest."

They crawled up a five-rung ladder and entered the house of the *Capitán*. The floors were clean, the beds small and the ceilings low. After a meal of rice and *sida*, Edward tumbled into bed and slept. Father Miguel awoke him. "The people are coming, Edward. Get ready for the meeting."

Outdoors it was as black as ink. The rain was still pattering on the roof. Soon the room was filled with Tipucans. Aventino lit the carbide lamp, drew forward a table and began to entertain the people with tricks. The simple natives gaped, and laughed at the Maestro's genial banter and broad quips. Then the Maestro launched forth into an explanation of Father Edward's coming there. With Pablo as interpreter, the young priest was introduced and told them briefly of the Catholic Church in the United States, how big its churches were, the Catholic schools in the parishes, the Holy Name Societies, and the numbers of people that belonged. When the priest had finished, a young man arose. He was not clothed like the others but wore shirt and trousers. In broken English he presented objections to what had been offered. Edward answered and illustrated his points with an incident or a parallel. The young man sat down. Father Miguel leaned over and whispered in the young priest's ear: "That is the *Capitán's* son. He went to a high school on the coast."

Aventino resorted to some more entertainment. He had just completed swallowing a centavo and extracting it from his ear when the *Capitán's* son, evidently desirous of showing that he, too, was capable of extraordinary things, strode up to the table. Then he placed a doubled piece of cloth over one edge of the table and squatting down and biting the table through this cloth, he began to rise from his squatting

position lifting the table with him. It was an exhibition of tremendous strength. The assembled people emitted a grunted "mm"; the official sign of approval.

The boy set the table back on the floor, looked at Aventino, and then pointed to the table.

Aventino refused. "No," he laughed genially, "I will do something else instead; something which even you, the *Capitán's* son, cannot do."

Aventino brought forward his saddle bags from beneath a bed. They were leather pouches connected by a thin leather thong. The catechist carried the bags to the center of the floor and invited a few men to lift them. Several did so and stated they were pretty heavy. Aventino suddenly leaned forward, passed the connecting strap of the saddle bags across the back of his right ear and slowly began to rise. The whole weight of the saddle bags was depending from his one ear! He lifted slowly, and just as slowly he set the bags back again on the floor. With a gesture and a genial smile he invited the young man to try his fortune.

Youth is rash, and the boy stepped quickly forward. He adjusted the saddle bags as he had seen the catechist do and slowly started to rise. The weight of the bags pulled his ear down like a leaf and the bags thudded to the floor.

The people laughed.

"You haven't got enough muscles in your ear," the Maestro said with a smile.

Again and again the youth essayed the feat of strength only to fail more miserably each time. In disgust he finally desisted and stalked to the back of the room.

Father Miguel then arose and spoke at length. Discussion about religion got under way. It was midnight before the meeting ended. Utterly weary Edward made his way over to his small bed and composed himself for sleep. The last thing he heard was the zealous voice of Aventino explaining some Old Testament stories to the *Capitán's* wife, who was still a pagan, and demonstrating from them that the Catholic

Church was the only true one. The catechist was making up in earnestness what he lacked in theology.

Aventino's hand was shaking him. Not yet dawn. "We must leave early, Faddaire," he apologized, "because there is a berry long trip."

Edward stared sleepily at the catechist. The man had done twice as much as he yesterday; and here he was up before anybody else.

Mass for the Catholic Tipucans was followed by a hasty breakfast of rice and *cacau*. Then they were in their saddles again. Aventino lingered a while talking with the *Capitán* at the door. Then he, too, vaulted into his saddle and with a thunderous yell of farewell moved slowly out. Everything was still gray from the last night's rain.

"What did the *Capitán* want?" Father Miguel asked.

Aventino flicked the flanks of his horse with a little whip. "He say I ask Apo Eduardo to send a *Santo Cristo*" (crucifix).

"I'll see that I do," Edward rejoined.

"They are all anxious to get a *Santo Cristo*," Father Miguel explained, "because the devil doctors refuse to enter a house where one is. They will not perform their incantations before one either."

The gray began to melt into the sudden and glorious gold of a tropic dawn. The missionaries had taken a trail that ran parallel to the river. Aventino decided on some speed. "*Passo!*" he called out, and suiting the action to the word he drew up his horse's head and led the gallop. Edward noticed that Tinto was plainly off his feed today and that his every action was balky. It was always a little difficult to put Tinto into the *passo*, and the priest had a feeling it would cause trouble this particular morning. Briskly he took up the horse's head. There was a convulsive plunge, a terrific snort, and the horse hurled his rider with a sickening thud to the ground and galloped frenziedly off the trail.

At the first sound of trouble Aventino had stopped his

horse like a statue. In a flash he sent his steed racing furiously after the riderless Tinto. Pablo helped by penning the animal in a pocket. Aventino slipped from his horse and finally secured the reins of the trembling runaway.

In the meantime Father Miguel had sped toward the quiet figure on the ground. He flung himself from his saddle and ran forward. "Are you hurt, Edward?" he cried. The prone figure did not reply. He turned the prostrate man over and felt for the heartbeat. Swiftly he procured his canteen and spilled its contents on the white face. Edward's eyes came open. "Are you hurt?" his companion asked again.

"Hurt? — No — I don't know — my shoulder — hurts awful and —"

Father Miguel slid his hand under the other's jacket. "Dislocated. Wait." He manipulated the arm, flexed the forearm, swung the elbow across the chest, then placed the hand on the opposite shoulder. The young priest groaned and fell back with beads of pain over his face. Father Miguel poured some brandy down his throat. "That hurt, eh?" he said. "It's right now though. It's back in place."

"I hope it is," the other said weakly.

"Your wrist too, eh?" said his companion, who had been examining him swiftly for any further injuries.

"Yes, it's hurting a little," he assented.

"Broken? Is it broken? Move the fingers."

The priest moved them.

"I guess it's only a sprain, but it's a wonderful one," the veteran remarked. "It's swelling up like a balloon." He pulled a roll of bandage out of his saddle bags.

"What happened?" he asked as he began tying up the wrist firmly.

"Haven't any idea," declared the young priest. "I simply took up his head for the *passo* and he went crazy."

"It was a good thing you kept your feet correctly in the stirrups," Father Miguel said. "If he had dragged you there wouldn't be much left of your head."

A shamefaced pair of catechists approached.

"What was wrong?" demanded Father Miguel.

"That boy," Aventino explained, "the one from Lianga, he does not know bridle. See, he put the chin chain under tongue . . . and the bit on top the tongue. When Apo Eduardo pull the rein the tongue is between and is cut."

Father Miguel launched forth into a philippic, warning the boys of the fact that they must always inspect everything before they set forth. It was a disgrace that the young priest was almost killed because of such negligence. The catechists bore the tirade humbly and without a word of protest. Aventino then fixed Tinto's harness correctly, soothed the horse gradually into a semblance of calm and assisted Edward to mount; the left arm, with its bad wrist and recent dislocation, was practically useless.

"We stop at Cabaruyan, Aventino," Father Miguel ordered. "We must fix Father Eduardo's arm better before we go on."

"Yes, Apo!" the catechist assented, a ready smile greeting the news.

"Cabaruyan is his favorite village," Father Miguel explained to the young priest.

"But I don't think you should go off the main trail just . . ."

"But I do," the older missionary rejoined. "That was not a jump into a feather bed you had. You feel very happy inside. do you?" he asked with a shrewd glance at the young priest's white face.

"Well, no. I am kind of rocky but I suppose that will wear off after a half-hour or so."

"You suppose wrong," the older missionary said. "In half an hour the sun will be very hot and there will be rivers to cross. You will feel worse."

"I am sorry to cause you the delay, Father, but I didn't know what to do when the horse started making that figure "S" in the air."

"Oh, there is no delay, Edward. This is a fine village. Almost all Catholics now. But there's work there always. You will see."

Aventino turned to Edward with a pleased and proud grin on his features. "Berry good this village," he proclaimed.

In a few minutes a flock of buck-toothed brownies descended upon the missionaries. Laughing, chattering welcomes, they literally dragged the catechists off their horses. Father Miguel helped the young priest alight. The boys kissed the priests' hands. Then they piled up in the saddle, four on each horse, and triumphantly led the procession into the village.

At the entrance of the largest dwelling stood a tall, somewhat wrinkled figure who greeted them with the calm dignity of a prince.

"This is *Capitán* Kinag," Father Miguel said. Aside he added. "As smart as a whip, as healthy as a horse, and he's more than eighty years old."

The *Capitán* led them into his house. There they were introduced to his son, also a Headman. Father Miguel launched into a recital of their mishap and at once their host said he had a sovereign remedy for restoring one's equilibrium. "*Arac!*" was his prescription, and his son disappeared to fill it. He returned with a bottle of clear, colorless liquid. Edward's canteen cup was half-filled and he took a polite gulp. "Whew!" he exclaimed, his eyes filled with tears, "firewater."

"That's right. It's what makes the wildcat wilder," Father Miguel remarked.

"What is it?"

"It is nameless," his companion replied. "I guess you could call it a *basi* brandy. They take a big crock of *basi* and insert a small dish inside, then cover the crock and boil it. The steam that comes up precipitates into the dish. That is the *arac*."

Edward finished the drink and in a few minutes was in a

copious sweat. A general feeling of well-being succeeded his nausea.

A group of boys trooped in, anxious to get a look at the Padre Americano.

"All these Catholics now," Aventino averred, "except that one," and he pointed to a bright-looking chip of a lad. The boy sat perfectly straight; he had an ugly festering wound on the left kneecap. It was puffed and was exuding pus. Above and below the wound a string of grass was tightly tied.

"Bolo, Faddaire," Aventino said succinctly, "slips and he cuts the leg."

"Didn't you do anything for it?"

"I put leaves on it, but it is no good," the Maestro replied. "Then he go to the devil doctor. She put string above the wound and on bottom, so bad spirit cannot go into rest of body. Bad spirit must stay inside cut. By and by the bad spirit gets tired and goes away. Then boy is cured."

"Nonsense," ejaculated Father Miguel, who had been listening attentively. "Tell the boy I will fix it for him."

It was plain that the boy was entirely opposed to this arrangement. Curtly the old *Capitán* spoke a sentence. The boy stood up at once and went straight to Edward. Aventino told him the other padre would cure him. It was useless. He liked this one, the Americano. Hot water was brought. The priest could use only one hand but Aventino helped him to wash the dried blood, crusted dirt, and pus from the gaping wound. He dabbed some iodine into the cut and assisted the priest to bandage the wound neatly, not omitting to snip the two grass strings which were cutting painfully into the flesh. He then explained to the boy what must be done every day to keep the wound clean. Edward placed his hand on the boy's head. "Feels better now?" Gratefully the boy took the priest's hand and kissed it.

Impressed by this rudimentary exposition of first aid, the *Capitán* asked Aventino if the missionaries would visit an ailing Tipucan in an adjacent hut. The first glimpse of the

figure on the mat was enough to stir Edward's heart. A mere shell of what had once been a strong young man lay there, his face ghostly, his eyes sunken deep in his head. Father Miguel put some questions. It was malaria. Fortunately, Edward had some quinine capsules in his bag, a gift of the Catholic Medical Mission Board.

Evening shadows were lengthening in the valleys before the sweat-drenched, saddle-galled riders came to Dagoman.

"The main village of the district," Father Miguel said to the tired priest at his side. "Lucky, we had no rain this afternoon. Tired, Edward?"

"So tired that I am not even hungry."

"You only think so because that sun's been beating on your head and back all day. Wait till you rest a little."

They dismounted stiffly from their saddles and walked into the *Capitán's* house. A shriveled old man was awaiting them but the carriage of his body was firm and erect. While the catechists and Father Miguel were chatting with the aged warrior, Edward sat in a chair and fell asleep. Father Miguel's hand on his shoulder brought him upright. The room was lit by a dull sort of light.

"Ready to eat now?"

"Why, yes; guess I fell asleep," mumbled the young priest.

"You did. You learn on the trail. Eat or sleep whenever you get the chance. You never know when you get the time for them and they are two very important things."

They sat down to eat. A dull light came from a wick lying in a plate of coconut oil. "Primitive lighting fixtures," Edward commented.

"Enough for their needs," rejoined the other. "They don't read, you know," he added dryly.

Edward ate rice, *sida*, eggs, and *bocayo*. The *bocayo*, a sort of sweetmeat made by boiling fresh coconut meat and sugar, was Aventino's attempt at reparation for the morning's accident.

A humorous glint flickered in Father Miguel's eye as he

watched his companion devouring everything in sight. "I thought you said you were too tired to feel hungry?" he quizzed.

"Well, I guess you were right, Father. A little rest out of the sun and the appetite appears."

"It always does, Edward," Father Miguel declared. If the young missionary had any doubt on the subject he had but to watch the trencher work of the older man, who disposed of fully three times the amount that he himself ate.

After the meal Father Miguel seemed to read Edward's thoughts. "This is just the time," he said, "when a man would like to turn up his toes and take a good long sleep, eh? But this is the time when the missionary goes to work."

"Work?" the other echoed blankly.

"Well, it may not appear work to others, but after ten hours in the saddle and under the tropic sun, I tell you, what a body craves is sleep, and not a function."

"Function? What's that?"

"It takes a long time to tell. You might call it a party, I guess. Here come the catechists to take us there. You will know all about them by tomorrow. I warn you, it lasts till midnight, at least."

With a groan the young priest heaved himself upright and followed the other three men down the bamboo ladder and out of the house.

Chapter 19

THE moonlight silvered the palm trees that circled the function. Directly outside the *capitán's* house sat Father Miguel, Edward, and the catechists, with the natives grouped around.

Aventino rose to explain the reason for their visit. Here for the first time Edward saw him display his oratorical talents. As the catechist's words poured forth the young priest was amazed that this face so easily mirroring moods of passion and vagaries of emotion, these hands so smoothly flowing with gestures to match his thought, could be the equipment of the humble Filipino who had been doing all the drudge work of the trip. "What a saliva he's got," commented Pablo admiringly, using the dialect phrase for an eloquent orator.

Then Father Miguel spoke. There was no stirring around in the pot in order to dish up something sweet for his listeners; the veteran snapped the lid right off and gave them something to chew on. There were some people who thought there were no Catholic priests in America, he said. He had brought one to prove to them that there was Catholicism in the United States. Edward's turn had come. His words and facts and figures were translated by Pablo to a perfectly immobile group of listeners.

Aventino then announced his famous act and went through his performance to the noisy enjoyment of both himself and the people.

"And now here come the drums," Father Miguel muttered to his young helper.

Six natives carried out six flat brass things like frying pans without handles.

Edward pointed to the underside of the drum, "Is that where they hit them, Father?"

"That's right. See how shiny it is?" Beneath the moon's rays the brass gleamed like old gold. "Generations of hands have pounded those drums and worn them smooth. This set here in Dagoman has been handed down from their ancestors."

The six natives sat in a row. From the waist of each man hung a drum by a thong, the bottom side of the pan uppermost, the rims resting against the bare thigh. The drums were of different sizes. One of the players struck his drum with the palm of his left hand and then rapidly with his right palm. The other instruments joined in, the first player acting as a sort of director always getting in the first beat solo and the others chorusing on the two-three-four.

Rhythmically the clatter quivered on the air. One, two, three, four! The brazen pulse kept beating, beating. Suddenly the circle of shadowed people opened. Aventino came teetering in on his toes, keeping time with the beating of the drums. He held a blue cloth stretched out before him in both hands. From the opposite side of the circle a girl appeared, swinging in rhythm to the music. Both her hands were held slightly above her head and in one of them she held a white cloth. Of a sudden Aventino, taking slow yet rhythmic steps, approached the girl; she, keeping rhythm with the music, backed away from him. Apparently chagrined, Aventino turned his back on her. The girl again started teetering on her toes, as did Aventino. He inched slowly around into position and suddenly made another swoop on the girl. Again she retreated rhythmically from him. He snapped the blue cloth held in his hands and like magic the drums ceased. The girl smiled and left the circle.

Aventino sat down by the *Capitán* on the opposite side of the circle.

"Now what?" Edward asked Father Miguel.

"The *Capitán* is congratulating Aventino. He is said to be the best dancer in this district. Another couple will dance in a minute."

Again the drums broke forth, and again the rhythmic pursuit and avoidance in that moonlit circle. It was wild, macabre with all those shadowed faces looking on. Edward felt sleepy. He leaned toward his companion. "I think I'll slip off to bed now, Father," he whispered.

"You can't — now," his companion snapped brusquely.

Edward looked at him in surprise. "Is there anything wrong? I am just exhausted."

"If you leave the circle now they will at once say their ancient tribal dance does not please you, that you despise their customs. Once they think that, you can go home. You will do nothing here."

Edward was nonplused. He sat back tiredly. "They must feel that we understand them and their rites," the other said. Edward continued to gaze at the endless pursuit, bafflement, pursuit, bafflement, rhythmically flowing back and forth with the pulse of drums.

"It looks sort of . . . sort of . . ."

The elder priest turned on him quickly. "Are the dances of the present time of a much higher grade than this?" he broke in. "These two dancers never so much as touch a hand."

Edward was too tired to discuss the subject, and anyhow Father Miguel did not seem to be very open-minded tonight. The dancing kept steadily on, noisily and rhythmically. Despite his best efforts his eyes closed and he nodded desperately. Father Miguel's elbow in his ribs roused him. "Here comes the reply to our talks; listen," he admonished.

The *Capitán* had arisen, at his side a jar of *basi*. He filled a coconut shell and then faced the visitors. In a high sing-

song chant he addressed each of them by name, ending with a long, quavering wail which was repeated by the person addressed. Then he took a draught of *basi* and began to chant his reply to all that the visitors had told his tribe; repeatedly he quavered out a final syllable in that same eerie wail. He declared that men of other religions had come, but that there was no place for them in their village and no hospitality in their dwellings. He, the *Capitán*, had told them point-blank "Almost all of us are Romanos (Roman Catholics). Why, therefore, do you come to us with yet another religion?" They had gone then, these other men, and had never returned. Then he told how glad he was to hear of all the things from America and that there were so many thousands of Romanos there. In his opinion it was a mere matter of time till all his district, all the terraces watered by the Tipucan River, saw its inhabitants Romanos. To signify that he had finished his discourse he drained the shell of *basi*.

The shell was then replenished and transferred from hand to hand as other headmen or the catechists rose and sang one of these "versos."

When the function broke up, it was past midnight. Edward speedily found a bed in a corner of the room. He had kicked off his shoes when the *Capitán* entered, arm in arm with Aventino. The old Tipucan went to a box and pulled out some dried tobacco plants. Stripping a leaf from the stem, he rolled it into a crude cigar. Then he brought forth from his sarong a small pouch from which he extracted a flint and steel. On one side of the flint he packed a little dried pith and then struck the flint briskly against the steel. A spark landed in the pith and ignited it. He lit his cigar.

It was the first time Edward had seen flint and steel in action. With Aventino as interpreter the old *Capitán* addressed a few questions to the young priest. Edward tried to answer but his tongue was clumsy and his only thought seemed to be sleep, sleep. Aventino observing his exhausted state pulled out the saddle bags from beneath the bed. At

the same time he whispered: "I give the *Capitán* a cigar, Padre Eduardo. When he smokes, you sleep. It is all right, then."

Gravely the *Capitán* accepted the cigar from Aventino. He lit it and threw his own homemade affair away.

Edward's last remembrance was of the golden-bronze stalwart nodding contentedly in the dim light of the coconut-oil lamp, smoke wreathing about his face as he declared: "It is a good tobacco. There is no bitterness in it."

Chapter 20

EDWARD, rolling over in bed, twisted his injured wrist and shoulder. In the shock of pain he awoke. Half-conscious, he noticed a figure kneeling by the dull gray of the window, "Must be praying," he thought and slept again.

Two hours later Father Miguel roused him for his morning bath. "There is a good place to swim, Edward. The first bend in the river."

Soon the cool water of the mountain stream was sending all the languor out of his limbs. With his right hand he held on to a submerged rock and let the swift-moving water flow over him. Invigorated, he returned to the village and found Father Miguel busy with baptisms. When the ceremonies were concluded, the older priest made him sit down for a new bandaging of the injured wrist.

"Say, Father, about four o'clock this morning," Edward said, "I saw somebody kneeling by the window."

"Oh, that was Aventino. He gets up half an hour before the rest of us to say his Rosary. Then he prepares for Mass. I told you that he was a man of gold."

"No wonder he is successful," the young priest remarked. "He pays for it."

"That's right. With work, sacrifice, and prayer."

Just then Aventino entered the room followed by a troop of little boys and girls who surrounded him while he began to pack the saddle bags. On the opposite wall hung a shaving

mirror belonging to Father Miguel. One of the little girls looked directly in the mirror and saw Edward's smiling face. Astounded, she called the attention of all the children to this wonder. Since they could see the priest without facing him they lost all bashfulness and began smiling at him in the mirror, using signs and gestures. Edward read the signals aright. "Aventino," he called. "My Punch and Judy friends want *carmelitos* and *medalles* and. . . ."

"*Rosario!*" (a rosary) a little girl cried out.

The ice was broken and the sack of the saddle bags began. They were all attending Aventino's catechism classes, so Edward dispensed with a generous hand. How grateful they were for such insignificant gifts and how happy! "How true, it is," he thought, "that the real joy is not always a thing of vast riches."

When the cavalcade prepared to depart there was a flock of children about Edward's horse. As he looked down at the happiness in their faces, he didn't mind the past days of toil. The *Capitán* and his son were on horseback, too, for the next and last village of the district was as yet a stronghold of paganism and they would offer protection. Through four hours of blasting heat they rode to the next village. Edward, feeling as if his eyeballs were simmering in their sockets, rode resolutely with the others. A half-hour before they came to Tanga a vehement downpour caught them. Fagged and drenched by the rain, Edward rode into a dismal assortment of huts which Aventino announced as Tanga, their destination.

There was no welcome here. The villagers looked at the missionaries askance. The children fled from them. Unchecked, the dogs snapped and snarled at them. Despite this poor beginning, the *Capitán* of Tanga and his son consented to receive them.

"The owner of this hut is called Pichay," explained Father Miguel, throwing down his wet saddle bags. "He will come soon. Aventino has sent the *Capitán* after him."

Edward was more interested in getting a drink of water than meeting the owner of the hut. There was no fire. The missionaries stripped off their sodden clothes and hung them about the dwelling in order to dry them. Father Miguel threw himself on the floor; then he opened his saddle bags and brought out a small bottle of white tablets.

"What's that?" Edward asked listlessly. He was propped up in a corner, laving the back of his neck with a wet handkerchief.

"Aspirin," was the rejoinder. "Two for you — you have fever. One for me — I have a headache."

"The owner of this place will be baptized tomorrow," Father Miguel continued, his eyes fixed on the rafters of the grass roof where a lizard was in wait for prey. "That is," he amended, "if all goes well."

"What's the danger?"

"Superstition," was the laconic reply. "Last year Aventino had this same man, Pichay, all ready for baptism. The night before the baptism Pichay gave a farewell party, a function. One jar of *basi* was placed on the edge of that window over there. He forgot about it, and in throwing back the bamboo window screen he knocked the jar to the ground. It was broken. Pichay said that was bad luck.

"And so all the king's horses and all the king's men could not get the jar into one piece again, eh?"

"Nor Pichay to his previous intention," added Father Miguel.

"This man is 'Teniente,' Faddaire," Aventino said. "Berry important. If he Catolico, many people here Catolicos."

Aventino outlined the program for the evening. A big function was to be held this night, in the course of which Apo Eduardo would tell all about the Catholic Church in the United States. He must speak "berry strong." After that Father Miguel would explain the truth and the wisdom of the Church. Then the *Capitán* of Dagoman and his son, headmen of the whole Tipucan district, would back up the

missioner's pleadings. As a grand finale there would be an *Ugayám* by Pichay, telling his own people his reasons for renouncing his belief of his forefathers and becoming a Catholic. Aventino asked Edward for a peso to buy a huge crock of *basi*. This would "oil" up the function.

Some time later Teniente Pichay entered. He proved to be a mahogany-faced, muscular little man with a definite air of authority. After the introductions, the Maestro took him into a corner and began drilling him on his catechism. Father Miguel afterward quizzed him. The priest set the morrow as his baptism date.

Darkness had fallen when the circle formed for the function. A huge crock of *basi* was set down before the *Capitán* of Dagoman; when he had sampled its contents the flowing bowl made the rounds. As master of ceremonies, Aventino had a successful evening. Events went forward until Pichay had risen and sung his swan song, an *Ugayám*, wherein he recounted the reasons for his conversion. When Pichay had seated himself, a thin youth lifted his coconut shell of *basi* in salute to the elders and sang an *Ugayám* in reply. "This one likes Protestante," whispered Aventino in Edward's ear. The substance of the youth's song bore out that remark. The singer advised the Teniente to defer his baptism until his own son should return from the lowlands, where he was studying. This son was subsidized by the Protestants. How did they know the Romanos were right? Pichay was making a mistake. He should wait and do what his son would direct.

Growling at the youth's temerity, the *Capitán* of Dagoman contemptuously spat on the ground. Nothing daunted, the singer turned from his topic to the assertions of the visiting American priest who had said there were twenty million Romanos in the States. It might be true; but the Americano had not proved it to them. It might be true, but there were one billion Protestants in the world, and when he himself changed his religion he would like to join the biggest religion.

Edward rose. In his short stay among these people he had learned that hard and fast logic does not always carry the day with them. In reply to the youth he said simply: "We have heard your statement that there are one billion Protestants in the world. Very good. Now you show us."

"I have the Bible," retorted the youth triumphantly.

"Good," rejoined the priest. "Show us where it says in the Bible that there are one billion Protestants."

As the youth paged feverishly through the book, whispers arose in the circle, then remarks, then snickers.

The young priest took from his pocket a neatly bound book of that year's religion statistics. He read from it the printer's name and the date. Then he read out the statement: "There are eighteen hundred million people in the world. Of these, more than 331 millions are Romanos, and less than 207 millions are Protestants!" He paused in order that Aventino might translate what he had said. Then Aventino showed the book to the headmen, pointing out the date and the numbers and guaranteeing that it was truly written down what the priest had said. "There are ten million Romanos in these Islands alone. If you doubt that, go to San Vicente and see all the people in the Catholic church. Ask those who have been to Manila how the Catholic churches are crowded with thousands. I think the young man does not know what he is talking about."

The elders nodded in acquiescence. This young man spoke of things he did not know. But the youth was versatile. He came to his feet and started arguing on an altogether different tack. "The Romanos baptize children. Why do they baptize children?" He flipped open his Bible and translated into the dialect: "Except you become as little children you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." He shut the book. "You see the little children are good enough for heaven." Challengingly he faced Edward. "Why do you baptize them?"

The priest rose. "Open your book at the gospel of St. Matthew," he requested.

The young objector complied.

"Find the last chapter. Chapter twenty-eight and the nineteenth verse," he ordered. "Read it aloud."

The young man read: "Going therefore teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." He closed the book and looked at the priest.

"Is a nation made up only of adults?" the priest asked.

There was a pause.

"Is your tribe made up only of the full-grown men and the women? Do the children belong to the tribe?"

The young man was silent.

"If that is not clear enough, read in St. Mark and see that our Lord says the Apostles should baptize 'every creature.'"

The young Tipucan changed the topic by an impassioned plea to his fellow tribesmen to take up the Bible: this book was the real book of religion and the Romanos had nothing except their *Misa* and their confessions.

"But where did you get the Bible?" Edward asked.

Again the young man was nonplused.

The priest looked around at the circle of gleaming, intent faces. "This book of which the young man speaks was kept by the Romanos for 1500 years. Every day we use it in our *Misa*."

With the battle going against him the young man reverted to another eulogy on the Bible. Priests were not needed. Everything was in the Bible.

The priest interposed. "This Bible of which you are continually speaking, will you tell us who is really its author?"

"Martin Luther!" was the amazing retort.

A loud laugh from Aventino turned the attention of the entire gathering his way. In rapid fluent speech the Maestro explained to the assembled tribesmen the ignorance of this rash youth. His explanation as to the authorship of the Scriptures brought a storm of laughter at the youth's expense. With it the function concluded.

At one o'clock in the morning the priests and catechists finally trudged aloft to their mats in the hut. Outside, the *Capitán* of Dagoman and his son, the *Capitán* of Tanga and the Teniente Pichay, as well as the defeated youth were still arguing. The moon broke through the clouds and silvered the small clearing where the function had been held and where now the five men sat grouped about the crock of *basi*. The *Capitán* of Tanga sang an *Ugayám* defending his pagan beliefs; he was convinced that the Catholic religion was a good one but he refused to be baptized because he would not have it said that he had led his people into a new religion. If they wanted to become Romanos, they were free to do so. When they became Romanos he would follow them. If he ever gave up paganism it would be for Catholicism.

Then the old *Capitán* of Dagoman took the stand and sang his congratulations to the Teniente Pichay on his manly step. In thundering phrases he reviled the youth for attempting to dissuade the older man.

Responding, the Teniente reiterated that he was fully aware of what he was doing. He had long studied the religion. He had weighed the reasons for it and against it. It would shame him to have to wait for his son's advice before taking this step.

The disputants then arose and trailed off to the huts assigned them. Suddenly a ghastly sound tore the deathly stillness of the night. A weird wail it was, beginning on a high note; then it dropped low and died off in the silence. Again and again the cry was repeated. It made chills run up and down the young missionary's back. He crawled over to Aventino.

"Aventino?" he whispered. "Did you hear that?"

"*Salmagui*" (devil worship), came the catechist's reply in a matter-of-fact voice. He rose and guided the priest to the window. A dim light was visible from an adjoining hut. Suddenly the weird cry like that of a tortured soul tore through the darkness. "Sorceress," the Maestro explained.

"Woman there have baby tonight, so the sorceress she kill pig and make magic. The bad spirits eat the pig blood and not hurt baby nor woman. Then everything all right." He grinned reassuringly. "Berry ignorant this people." Reassured, the priest went back to his mat.

Early next morning the regenerating waters of baptism were poured upon the head of the Teniente. After a bowl of hot rice the missionaries left the village and turned their horses homeward. They rode hard, stopping at Dagoman to take leave of the *Capitán* and his son who had aided them so willingly in last night's work. In the *Capitán's* hut they split some coconuts, drank the milk, and again ploughed forth into the sunshine.

As a result of the past day's drenching in the rain and the inability to change into dry clothes, both priests were feverish. They swallowed some aspirin tablets and jolted onward.

The sun was merciless. Edward's lips, blistered with fever, cracked open and bled painfully. Uncomplainingly he rode. A day or two of more rain would probably render the rivers impassable. They crossed thirteen swollen rivers, the horses floundering and splashing though the current while their riders clung silently to the saddle. When the last river had been forded Edward turned in his saddle and said to Father Miguel: "I know now why Aventino and Pablo always make the sign of the cross when leaving a village; they are thinking of the rivers they have to cross."

The older missionary smiled. "Not only the rivers," he rejoined. "Look at this."

At the moment they were at the top of a steep path that fell abruptly to the river bed. Sections of the trail had been washed out. Other parts were buried under small slides of detritus, rocks, and plants that had tumbled down from the higher slopes. At many spots the missionaries had to dismount and lead their horses around the obstacles.

"We are making for Laban. Hope to lay over there tonight," Father Miguel said. "Plans for a chapel there. An

old pagan offers me ground for it. There's a catch. I've got to build the chapel."

"Well . . .?"

"And another well! Money . . ."

"Oh! Maybe I can get some friends at home to help."

"Here's hoping," the veteran answered.

"Say," exclaimed the young missionary, "isn't that beautiful!" He pointed aloft to the mountain tops over which a line of white cloud ships were floating.

Father Miguel nodded and then jerked his head a bit backward. "Look over your shoulder," he counseled.

The other did so, and saw a brooding wall of black clouds. "*Dies Irae!*" he exclaimed, "more rain!"

Setting spurs to their horses they managed to beat the rain by a small margin. But they found Laban under a still blacker cloud, a cloud of death. A group of excited Tipucans greeted them with a flood of words and gestures.

The catechist turned a grave face toward the priests: "A woman is bit by a snake. She will die," he declared.

"Who is it?" Father Miguel asked.

"The wife of Calub."

Father Miguel sprang swiftly from his saddle. In a moment he had the holy oils in his hands and was running with the Tipucans for a near-by hut. Edward followed as fast as his stiff legs would take him. He found Father Miguel in the middle of the anointing. The woman was a ghastly sight. Fear had blanched her face and the venom had numbed her. At the foot of her mat sat a young Apollo of a Tipucan whose face was working with the grief that tore his heart. In an hour the tragedy was complete. The young wife and mother was a swollen corpse, the face blackened and bloated looking. Edward rose stiffly from his knees and followed Aventino outside. "How did it happen?" he asked.

"She goes to open the house where the rice is kept. A snake is sleeping inside, a rice snake. Pok! He bites her hand . . . and she is dead," the Maestro narrated graphically.

A little later Father Miguel was busily engaged in a long argument with some natives about the ground for a chapel. Edward went to the hut assigned to them and fell into a broken feverish slumber.

At dawn the missionaries greased the backs of their saddle-sore mounts, adjusted their packs, and were off for the last lap of their homeward trip. That morning after Mass the dead woman had been buried and the gloom of her tragic passing hung over their spirits for a while. But in the tropics everything is sudden, dawn and sunset, love and hate, birth and death. The exigencies of the trail, their fast pace, and the prospect of a solid bed soon took their minds off that doleful incident.

In the vast magnificence that stretched out before him that day, there was not much of beauty for Edward. His body was wracked with stiffness, his eyes sore with fever, his lips cracked, his tired head obsessed with thoughts of a bed, of sleep, of rest, of no more riding, riding, riding. His bruised wrist beneath its soiled bandage grew stiff and painful. The sun sapped his strength. His weary beast stumbled and slid repeatedly and was a drag on their progress. Toward eventide they ambled heavily into the village of San Vicente and drew up before the *convento*.

Edward was too tired even to smile at Ramon's enthusiastic greeting. Stiff-legged he labored up the stairs to his room. Dropping his helmet on the floor, he drank greedily and plunged his head in a basin of clean water. Loud voices, raised in altercation, came from beneath his window. A group of girls was gathered about Father Miguel who clutched by the arm a ragged imp of a boy.

"You were stealing my *papayas* again," the priest shouted. "This time I caught you."

The boy replied with a brazen denial.

At that moment the boy's father came upon the scene and asked what was wrong.

Father Miguel told him. Without saying a word the re-

doubtable parent had the youth over his knee; whipping out his *buneng* (*bolo*) he vehemently applied the flat of the heavy blade to the seat of his offspring's trousers. This parental office completed, he promised his weeping son a second installment if he did not beg the Father's pardon then and there. The boy's apology followed.

As Edward was falling asleep he was wondering where the older priest got the energy to be chasing recalcitrant boys after such a trip.

Twelve hours later he awoke. He was lying in bed fully dressed in his riding togs. One shoe was off. "I must have been pretty tired," he muttered sleepily to himself. He kicked off the other shoe.

He was stiff and sore from riding, chilled from the rain, his lips sore from fever. He had had to live like the natives, primitive in food, housing, in speech, almost in thought. He could not do things as he wanted; he must do them as they do. His notions must be changed. It was like tearing oneself up by the roots.

Turning over, he slept again.

Chapter 21

FOR the three months of the rainy season the missionaries were cut off from the outside world. The *nep-nep* held sway: a steady beating rain that drenched the fields and changed the mountain streamlets into rushing torrents. In the *convento* everything grew damp. Belongings drooped until the general appearance of things was that of a moldy mop. Clothes and books were covered with fungi. Flying cockroaches ate portions of the bindings of the books, leaving white scaly patches as signs of their depredations. Stamps and envelope flaps stuck tightly together.

The sick calls were taken by Father Miguel. "You're not ready for that kind of work yet, Edward," he said. "It takes a lot of skill on the horse, and a knowledge of the trail to get places now. If you come through without accidents it's usually due to your Guardian Angel. They say each missionary has a half dozen," he appended whimsically.

Dreary days followed. Scarcely anyone was seen for weeks. The rivers were in spate and utterly impassable. For more than three months no mail came through.

Toward the end of the second week Edward grew fretful. He began to find his books insipid, his breviary brought no comfort, his rosary became routine. He recalled that he had not felt this flatness of things when the rainy season had found him in the seminary. Then the persistent downpour, beating on the roof with a tattoo that kept on for days, had

been little more than something to keep him within doors; he had his classes to take care of, his pupils to interview, his daily routine to follow. But here in this mountain country, the rain was a pitiless enemy. He felt that it was beating on his very brain, as a pneumatic drill beats on a slab of asphalt. He began to be hopeless and miserable.

He tried to practice the dialect by conversations with Ramon, but the boy's talk tended only to drive him nearer to madness. He tried to pray, tried even when the very words of his prayer seemed to mock him. At table with Father Miguel, he became silent and unresponsive. Then, as day followed day, he began to see insults in the older missionary's remarks. One evening at supper Father Miguel accidentally upset a pot of hot chocolate and spilled the liquid on Edward's knees. With lips tense and eyes flashing, the young priest leaped to his feet and left the table. Within an hour he went to the pastor's room and apologized. He was maddened when the older priest only laughed it off.

Soon the desolate days were followed by restless, sleepless nights. He would crawl under his mosquito net and compose himself for sleep, but after an hour or two he was pacing the floor. Night after night he called himself a fool for having sought this high vocation of the priesthood. Night after night his conscience drove him to his knees and made him beg forgiveness for his weakness and disloyalty. After two or three hours' sleep he arose to say Mass. It frightened him to see that even at the altar he felt no quickening, no warmth, no devotion. The houseboy, Ramon, could drowse through the long days. Father Miguel was always busy in his rooms, although it was never apparent that he did very much. But the young priest found no peace anywhere.

Finally, out of it all one resolution crystallized. He would leave the missionary life. He sat down at his desk and wrote to his Provincial, explaining that he was unfitted for the task assigned him and that he was unable to go on. He thought that in the act of sealing the letter he should have

found joy and relief. Instead, his pain became all the sharper and he began to call himself a renegade. But by this time he felt that he must be guided by his intelligence. He would stick to his decision. The missionary life was not for him.

Propped on his desk, the letter to the Provincial seemed to close a chapter of his life. He didn't care where he would go in the future or to what priestly work he would be assigned. One thing, however, was certain: he must, at all costs, get out of the missionary field. He sat at his desk and began a letter to his mother. She must be the first to know. He had written only two lines when his agony gripped him again. How could he hurt her? How could he tell her that her son was a coward?

The fateful letter to the Provincial stood on his desk, a reminder, a challenge that held him to the resolution he had taken. Deliberately he put away thoughts that impelled him to reconsider his decision. Day after day he tried to compose himself to a new outlook, a perspective where there would be men and women of his own race and color to work with. Surely there were souls to be saved in his own country, human lives to be guided, work to be done for the Master? But the letter to his mother refused to be written. He simply could not tell her that he had failed.

In sheer desperation he opened his diary, resolved to set down his thoughts as honestly and as clearly as he could. Hour after hour he wrote, pouring out in those sacred pages all the elements of the conflict that raged in his heart. The effort of writing the story made him see himself more clearly. Dimly at first, but with greater clarity as the days progressed, he realized that he was a soldier who had enlisted for the duration of a war. He was a soldier of the cross, he told himself. His warfare was against human sin and human sorrow, and his commander in chief was the Lord Jesus Christ. Two weeks after it was written he burned the letter to the Provincial.

Out of all the welter of pain he drew forth a new truth.

He had always believed that the missionary's life was a vocation to a life of doing. Now he realized that it was also a vocation of suffering. He knew the forms the suffering would take. He steeled himself against the loneliness, the sense of futility, the feeling of waste, the thought that he was, from the human viewpoint, simply throwing away his life. One morning at Mass he dedicated himself anew. Leaning over the chalice he prayed that God might anneal his will to endure, might strengthen him to bear without complaint the inevitable periods of inactivity, of seemingly fruitless labor, of inner dryness and lack of devotion. When the Mass was finished, he spent a half-hour in making his thanksgiving. Like a shaft of sunlight breaking through the clouds, there flashed upon his soul the truth of St. Paul's great line: "I know in whom I have believed."

Eventually the downpour began to slacken. Then came only half days of rain. Finally the golden sunlight broke through and wrapped the world in its embrace. Speedily the pools of water were soaked up by the torrid sun, and the trails dried. Gradually the turbid torrents of the river began to subside.

"Well," Father Miguel said one glorious day, "I've been down to the river. I think we can make it to Bañao tomorrow. They have a *balsa* going across the river. We should go in for the monthly recollection."

"That sounds good. I've almost worn a hole in the floor these past three months."

The older priest laughed genially. "You do not like the quiet life, eh? Well, now you have nine months and no rest. Maybe when the rainy season comes next year you will be sorry that it lasts only three months."

"Maybe," the other admitted dubiously.

Next day both missionaries were in the saddle. Edward felt glad to go bucketing along the trail and to see the verdant beauty draping all the mountainsides. Blue sky, splashing brooks, high-shouldered, vivid, green-garmented mountains.

It was good to be alive! He sang snatches of song as they rode.

The Alva River was still running swift and strong, and could not as yet be forded. The *balseiros* (raftsmen) equipped with long bamboo poles shod with iron, were awaiting the missionaries. The raft was a capacious rectangle of bamboos lashed together.

Father Miguel stripped all the gear from his mount. This was carefully piled upon the raft. Edward looked on indifferently, still humming a song.

"You had better unsaddle your horse," counseled Father Miguel.

"Won't the *balsa* bear his weight?"

"Oh, yes. It carries two horses easily."

"Well, then why all the unnecessary work?" The young priest was loathe to be disturbed from his enjoyment of the beauties of nature.

"Well . . ." began Father Miguel, lifting his helmet to scratch his head. "To tell you the truth, the real reason for it, I don't know. But it's the custom. The old priest who broke me in told me to do it that way and I didn't ask questions. Besides every missionary does it," he argued.

"Stone-age methods!"

"You hold your horse's halter," the other directed patiently. "He will swim right along with the raft."

"I think I'll try it the modern way." Despite the protesting look in Father Miguel's eyes, Edward urged his mount forward and rode up on the raft.

The *balseiros* looked askance at this youthful iconoclast but he was an *Apo Padi* (Reverend Father) and must be deferred to. The raft, released from its moorings, floated gently out into the stream. Father Miguel squatted on the raft, holding his horse's halter and working the beast firmly into the deep water. Finally the horse's feet lost bottom and it began swimming smoothly and steadily with the raft.

But all did not go as smoothly with Edward. As the raft

came into the current the *balseros* thrust their poles into the river bed and shoved lustily. With each shove of the *balseros'* poles Edward's steed took a backward step. It was impossible to hold him steady. The raft was in the clutch of the current and then the men had to keep poling with might and main. The horse's reverse motion increased with the activity of the *balseros'* shoves. Finally he backed straight off the *balsa* into the stream while the priest frantically kicked to get free of his stirrups.

Father Miguel was taken up with holding his own horse in tow. "The pole, quick, quick!" he yelled.

Edward threw out his hands and seized one of the poles thrust toward him. The *balseros* pulled him to the raft. Father Miguel laid hold of him with one hand and helped him crawl aboard the raft. The *balseros* were plying their poles fast and furiously again to make up lost headway. It was a sodden young apostle that sprawled on the raft. Father Miguel said nothing.

The bedraggled figure sat up and turned shamefacedly to his companion. "The horse, Father?"

Father Miguel pointed to the river. Tinto was swimming along behind the raft.

"It was simply impossible to hold him, Father."

"I suppose that must be why all the missionaries strip the horses and swim them," was the quiet rebuke.

When the *balsa* landed on the opposite bank, Tinto allowed himself to be taken without the least demur. Edward then poured the water out of his saddle bags and went up to a grove of bamboos and undressed. His breviary and underclothes he set out in the sun with the rest of his clothes to dry.

The scorching sun soon dried them, or rather baked them into a prickly kind of cardboard that retained a fishy odor from their immersion in the river.

"You smell like the mackerel on Halstead Street," Father Miguel observed.

"Yes; and I don't like fish."

"Well; you know how to keep away from them next time."

They mounted and rode.

The missionaries arrived at Bañao, the central station of the mission, at the siesta hour. Six months had passed by since Edward had ridden out of here. He felt vastly older since that event, although he had had but a slight taste of the new life that makes up missionary endeavor. They came to the central house.

"Make as little noise as possible," Father Miguel cautioned. "The other Fathers arrived in the morning. They are taking siesta now."

A sleepy-eyed houseboy took care of their horses and the pair stole quietly up to the veranda. "You can take a bath," Father Miguel directed, "and I'll get you some white clothes."

A half-hour later, cool and clean in his borrowed clothes, Edward went out on the veranda to say his breviary. A huge heap of a man was overflowing a *mañana* chair.

"Hello!" the perspiring priest said, opening wide a pair of bold humorous eyes. "Who have we here? Father Courtney?"

"Yes, Father."

"Thought so," the other said. "I'm Andersen, Padre Luis Andersen, *cura parocco* of Pandan. If I wasn't prostrated with the heat I'd stand up." He grinned and extended his hand.

"Sit down, sit down," the indolent giant invited, waving Edward toward a vacant chair. "Do you want to get a stroke?"

The young priest smiled and sat down. "This is certainly the land of the hot," he said.

The burly figure opposite him grunted confirmation. "Any day in December I can stand on a chair and dive off into a pool of my own perspiration," he asserted. "I can't sleep in

the beds at this station," he complained. "They've got mattresses in them. It's like sleeping in a frying pan. Where's that houseboy?" he broke off. "I called him six times already. Sleeps the whole blessed day." He called aloud. "Sixtol"

A boy clad in white shorts and a white cotton shirt walked out onto the veranda. He was blinking his eyes.

"*Cararamba!*" the big priest ejaculated. "Must I rupture my larynx to make you answer? A pitcher of ice water before I liquefy, *pronto!*"

"Yes, Faddaire," the boy drawled. Moving like one in a dream he took the pitcher from the table and sauntered slowly away.

"How do you like that?" Father Andersen asked irritably.

"An Elgin movement," Edward grinned. "I can't say I blame him," he added. "I feel just the same way about things in general."

"Of course," the other conceded, "everyone does at this period of the day, but this particular little fellow has a perennial paralysis as far as all effort is concerned. Padre José here is too kind with them."

The boy brought the water, grinned, and left. The priest took his glass of ice water and rested it on the arm of his chair. "I had two rascals in my mission that I cured of their rascality. My place, Buena Vista. You must ride over and see me sometime. It has an old Spanish bell tower alongside the church. At night all the bats in creation congregate there. Not baseball bats, but flying bats, bug-chasers. Oh, you know what I mean?"

"I know all about them," Edward assured him.

"That's right; you should, being a missionary now. Like our debts, the bats we always have with us. Well, this bell tower was a crumbly old thing but its bells were still in good shape. One night, about half an hour or so after the Almas Bell had been rung, the bells in my tower start doing a fandango. I sent my boy out for the bell ringer and asked him what this ungodly ringing of bells was for. "Some rascals

make foolishness!" was the essence of what he took a half-hour to say.

"Aha!" said I. "Do you know them?"

"Yes; they are two boys — Jovito and Santiago."

"And will they come again?"

"I am sure. Yes, Faddaire; tomorrow again."

"Very good," replied I, "I also make jokes."

"Well, it was about nine thirty the following evening, the hour when all God-fearing Filipinos are stretched on their mats. The bells of my tower began to ring again. The small bells at first, softly; then the larger ones joining in, loudly. I had taken up a place near the tower. As soon as the disturbance started I ran quickly to the base of the tower. Propped against its side was a long bamboo ladder. Gently I tilted it until the top swung toward me and it lay flat on the ground. Then back I went, noiselessly, to my room." He paused and laughed. "Did I tell you that the stairs of the tower had been eaten away by white ants years ago? No? Well, they had, and the outside ladder was the only means for getting up or down. I slept the sleep of the just. At early dawn I arose. Accompanied by my bell ringer, I went to the tower. We put the ladder in place and I spoke in a loud voice to the bell ringer: "Pablo, you say some of the bells are getting old?"

"Yes, Faddaire. There is even a crack in one."

"Guess I'll look at them. Maybe they can be repaired."

"There was no sign of life, no reaction from the top of the tower. "I will go first," I said, more toward the top of the belfry than to Pablo.

"Swiftly I ascended. On the top rung I paused. There were the two chastened rascals sitting uncomfortably back to back, their faces covered with confusion, cobwebs in their hair, and sleeplessness in their eyes. I let my mouth fall open. 'S-a-ay! What are you two doing here?' "

"We are waiting, Faddaire."

"For what?"

"For you."

"For me?" Have you been sleeping here all night?"

"Could not sleep, Faddaire. There is too many bats."

"And that insects!" the other lad said with vehemence.

"Well, why did you stay here then?"

"Because there is no ladder."

"But you didn't say anything to me when I took it away. Why?"

"Because," the spokesman replied, "we are ashamed."

"Ashamed of what?" I probed.

"Of making jokes with the bells."

"Oho!" I exclaimed. "You were making jokes with the bells! You see what happens then? The bells make jokes on you."

"Very bad joke," one boy muttered.

"Very dark and dang-er-ous here," the other corroborated.

"I went down the ladder slowly and those two boys got down after me as fast as their legs would let them. No hand touches those bells now except Pablo's," Father Andersen stated emphatically.

A heavy step sounded on the veranda. Edward turned to behold Father Miguel escorting a stout cherubic-faced figure in a white *soutana*. "Father Courtney," Father Miguel announced, "this is Father José, the *cura parocco* of Bañao."

"Oh, we met, we met already," Father José interposed, swabbing his neck with a small-sized towel. "I put him on the road to that up-and-down vineyard of yours over there in San Vicente." Father José shook with laughter and slowly let himself down into a chair. "Father Miguel was telling me you had a little er . . . mishap on your way in," he teased, his eyes twinkling.

"What was that?" Father Andersen asked.

"Oh, just a little wetting," Edward said.

But Father Andersen was not to be put off, for it is just these incidents of the trail that are the breath of the missionary's nostrils. With a somewhat shamefaced air Edward

recounted the results of his first essay in liberal thinking on the mission field. Father Andersen laughed uproariously and brought his huge hand down with more friendliness than gentleness on Edward's knee. "That horse on the raft," he laughed, "worked just like a wheat stalk up your sleeve, eh? You shake it out and it crawls up. Every shove forward was a horse's foot backward," he laughed loudly. "You'll learn to listen next time."

Father Miguel came to the rescue. "I guess we all learn that in time," he commented significantly. "You remember your first trip, Father Andersen, on that sorrel horse?"

The big missionary's laughter suddenly subsided. "Remember it?" he ejaculated. "That ham-handed idiot that sold me that sorrel will too, if I ever lay hands on him."

"But he told you to unsaddle him at all river crossings," Father Miguel interposed, "and let him make his own way across. Don't you remember? We all told you to do what he advised," he added pointedly.

The big missionary was silent.

"What was wrong?" Edward asked.

"Why, Father Andersen didn't follow instructions," Father Miguel replied, "and forded a river astride."

"Yes," Father Andersen said, "and that sorrel didn't show any signs of misbehavior. She surefooted her way across that current and those rocks like a . . . like a . . . well, like nothing I have yet ridden. But, just at the edge of the river, as we are emerging, she rolled!" The big priest stopped his narrative and glared at his listeners as though challenging anyone to laugh.

"She just rolled," continued the narrator, "saddle bags and all. Rolled! Right there in that tub of mountain mud and water and stinking dead fish and age-old algae. I got up on the shore and spent a lot of time digging river effluvium out of my eyes, ears, nose, and neck."

"And then I suppose you spoke a few words, Nubian words, to the horse," Father José suggested gently.

Father Andersen looked at him. "I don't know exactly what you mean by Nubian words, but I tell you that for the next five minutes I forgot all about the Beatitudes."

"You mean you forgot the promise that the meek shall possess the land?" Father José inquired blandly.

"Uh-huh. I possessed myself of a whopping good bamboo slat and. . . . Well, I got most of the river mud off that sorrel's hide."

Father José chuckled genially. He swabbed his rubicund face with his towel. "You see, Father," he vouchsafed, turning to Edward, "these things happen to everyone on the mission. At the time they may cause you great inconvenience, danger, even harm. Yet the real missionary treasures them. I don't mean either as an item for his diary or as another shaft for his long bow."

"I think I understand," Edward said. One had suffered a little, had done something out of the ordinary or had undergone a trying humiliation for the Man on the cross. This was what put the value upon these experiences and the zest in their remembrance.

"You wouldn't think now," Father José went on in his soft voice, "that anything could happen to such a cautious, carefully nurtured person as myself, but one day something out of the ordinary did actually befall me."

Father Miguel looked at the speaker as though to protest, thought better of it, and remained silent. He had ridden the trails with Father José and knew that he would face anything with a quotation from the classics or some absurd jest on his lips.

"It was the time," Father José reminisced, "when centavos were as plentiful as white crows. I had no horse and a sick call came in. The messenger who brought me the news told me that the people had sent a horse and that it would be waiting for me — *trans Jordanem* . . . on the other side of the Alva River. Armed with the holy oils, I plodded as far as the river. Now, Father," he turned to Edward, "you know

this Alva is a scapegrace of a river — banks on our side like sheer walls, straight and steep as a ladder, with no means of descending to the stream save by leaping down or by taking a kilometer walk north." He paused and reached for a glass of ice water. "You probably know by now, Father Courtney, he continued, "that watches in the mountains are as rare as pink elephants. All the natives go by the big clock that God winds up every night and leaves hanging out in the expansive face of the heavens all day. The boy who was to meet me at the river with a horse was going by sun time. I was going by Ingersoll time. For two scorching hours I sat on that exposed riverbank and stewed in my own juice, as the poets say. To keep my blood pressure down I kept tolling off my beads. It helps."

He stooped forward and refreshed himself from the pitcher.

"At long last the dilatory messenger appeared on the opposite side of the river, spurring his steed frantically onward. Something must have gone amiss, I thought. Directly through the stream he came, right up to the bank, and halted his horse. He looked straight up at me, his pock-marked face glistening with sweat beneath his floppy straw hat; his horse standing in the stream.

"'Apol!'" the rider gasps, "'very sick now . . . hurry!'"

"I looked to the right. I looked to the left. Sheer bank dropped straight away from my feet. Below that the water was waiting. 'All right,' I ordered the boy. 'Get off that horse and hold him.' My mind was made up. The rider slid off the horse into the water and backed the cob up toward the bank until he was stationed directly below me. Then I, being of unsound mind and failing health due to my prolonged stay beneath the sun, girded up my cassock about me and vaulted gracefully forth from the bank with outstretched legs and with tight-shut eyes. I braced myself for the shock of landing in the saddle, but it far exceeded all my expectations. There was a colossal splash. Opening my eyes I found myself sitting

on the graveled bed of the Alva River. I slopped my way across the river and emerged on the opposite bank in time to see my horse disappear around a hillock."

"Did you go on?" Edward interposed.

"Of course," was the simple reply. "I had to. Someone needed me. That's what priests are for. I took off my cassock and set off for the distant village. The clothes dried on my back and the blisters rose on my feet. 'Oh, how beautiful are the feet of those bringing good tidings and preaching peace.' The ailing one proved to be the barrio patriarch, a man so old that the hoariest old-timers of the vicinity related that they were still in swaddling clothes when this patriarch was already venerable. Now as he lay gasping out his last breath he begged for baptism. I poured the saving waters over his head and stayed with him till the end." Father José drew his towel across his neck in a decrescendo style. "It was late in the day," he concluded, "when I rode back. My clothes had steamed themselves dry on my back. My blistered feet pressed against the stirrups, and the saddle — well, that was no comfort at all."

"You had saved a soul," Father Andersen remarked.

"Right you are," the genial padre agreed, "and I'd pay more than a few blisters for that privilege."

New arrivals drifted out on to the veranda. Lean men, eager men, tired-faced men, sunburnt men, all steeped in affairs, enterprises, building, catechist arrangements, hopes and fears. Edward was captivated by the virile camaraderie, the joking inquiries about pet projects, the chaffing about some individual eccentricity, the readiness to help each other, the general sense of understanding that seemed to be part and parcel of these hardy apostles. They greeted him and talked and advised and asked questions as though they had known him all their lives.

In a lull, Father Miguel leaned over toward his young assistant. "This monthly meeting is a tonic," he confided. "Get as much out of it as you can. It lasts only a few hours."

"There's a sermon tonight after supper, isn't there?" Edward asked.

"Yes; by Father José," the other rejoined. "Tomorrow morning there is silence. You go over your spiritual books then and see if in trying to save the souls of others you aren't forgetting your own."

A slight, blond-haired priest was the center of attention. His eyes were alight as he told how he had organized a procession in spite of threats and warnings. In the midst of the procession one maddened devotee of the devil doctors had run amuck and had jumped at him with an upraised *bolo*. His boy, jumping between the fanatic and the priest, had received the blade in his heart. There were ejaculations and admiration and questions from the missionaries.

Father Miguel turned to his young assistant. "He has a tough station, Padre 'Genio has. Always fights and killings and trouble. But he is the man for it."

"He doesn't look very strong," Edward remarked.

"It's not the body alone in this kind of work," Father Miguel said slowly. "It's the spirit in a man that is everything."

Another missionary launched into a recital. "If only these men would write books," Edward observed.

Father Miguel shot a quick glance at the young priest. "We don't write books. We live them," was his laconic retort.

At the sound of a bell the priests made for the stairs. "The call for supper," Father José explained. "I advise you to eat quickly. Most of these backwoodsmen see real food only once a month and they come prepared to do real work at the table."

In the dining room, the table was spread with chicken, plates of steaming rice, fried eggplant, *papayas*, and bananas. Grace was said, and soon the room rang with the noise of clattering spoons and forks, of laughter and jokes, of questions and anecdotes. For a moment Edward sat wordless among these veteran missionaries. What an ease and verve

about them! His heart filled. "Here," he thought, "is the real chivalry of the Catholic Church, brave hearts, strong hearts, humble and loyal hearts, apostles clad in plain cassocks or in shabby riding togs." A voice called his name. He suddenly woke from his reverie and began to reach for food. "An army marches on its stomach," a happy voice chanted in his ear.

"Look," Father Andersen boomed, pointing at Father Miguel's heaped-up plate, "Father Miguel must be going to march to San Vicente on foot."

Laughter arose on all sides.

"Work hard, pray hard, eat a lot," Father Miguel retorted. "That's the missionary's rule of life."

A clatter of forks and spoons and knives chorused approval.

Chapter 22

POWDERED dust lay deep in the roadways of San Vicente. The tall coconut palms moved not a tip of their elegant fronds. It was the apogee of the dry season. The day was dead with heat.

Edward sprawled uncomfortably in his bed. It was the siesta hour. With the room thermometer at 102 degrees his body was all perspiration. Sleep was out of the question. He slowly moved a fan with his left hand; in his right hand he held a letter from one of the seminarians in Santo Espiritu. For a moment he forgot his discomfort and laughed aloud. It ran:

Dear Rev. Father Eduardo: May you be reach by this letter of mine firstly is my best regards to you and all of you their, and I, if you may ask is well in the help of our Lord God Almighty. Sitting in my comfortable seat at the rear of the study hall I am writing you that my sickness is passed. When I was sick my Mother was sleeping and I too also slept. In the middle of the night my Mother heard a voice. The voice said that you woman go and get the leaves be put on the back of your son. Then my Mother went to get and put it on my back. My Mother prayed and after strong devotions I became well. I nearly died because of the plague that is like one peso on my back. When I first get up I cannot hear. It is always like the sound "m" in my ear.

We have a big baguio (typhoon) in the rainy reason. The streets is so muddy that nobody can pass except by passing without long pants. The weather was also coled.

The only thing I can tell you is that your society for the public school boys is destructed now. There is no Father to take care.

Your server,

Timoteo Villaneuva.

With the letter was a note from Brother José. The good Brother was evidently new to this sort of endeavor, too. Though briefer, his note was less laughable. It read:

Dear & Rev. Father:

Best wishes here from Santo Espiritu. Long time already I intend to write you, but this noon as your appreciate letter arrived I got the last push. I closet your trunk and keeping the Keys. I think it is alright now.

Yesterday there arrived a packages for you, I don't know what is insite, outsite is papel. That *Paket* is very long and very light.

Here in the house every thing is quit, very quit, the same with me.

Now I don't know what about our Melon, the ones we plant, if they are sweet, I'll write you once more.

No more earthquakes have come since you are away. Bananas we plenty now, even very big once.

Now I must make an end. I have namely not much *Zeit*, when I have something forgotten, it is something to write you later.

How goes it really with you in the Missions? Always are you welcome here and then will we make open the *Paket*.

Before my table,

Br. Jose.

Edward smiled. Already almost a year had slipped by. It seemed such a distant picture, unreal almost in its faintness, those smooth-flowing days of routine in the seminary of Santo Espiritu: everything going by the bell with such quiet precision and regularity. What a changed life he was leading now! All his days were turmoil. Instructions in this village, then in that. Trips by horse to this district, then to another. Sick calls, discussions with pagans, quarrels among the Catholics, weariness in the saddle, directions to catechists, care of

sick, plans, plans, plans . . . and no money. How good it was to stretch out on a mat at night! How tired he was each morning! Suffering there was plenty. Dengue fever, red dog, skin diseases, irritating and persisting, but he was doing, achieving.

The thud of a horse's hooves in the patio brought him out of his daydreaming. He went to the window in time to see a catechist pull up his mount in a cloud of dust. "Apo," the rider called in a tired voice.

"Apo," he sang out in reply.

"Carlos in Lacuban, berry sick, dying," he announced. "I am there last night. I ride berry hard."

"I'll be ready in a minute," the priest replied. His torpor fell from him like a cloak. He donned his stuffy riding togs, took the holy oils and the Blessed Sacrament, placed a large cool banana leaf inside his sun helmet. In a few minutes he was pounding up clouds of dust on the sun-scorched trail. It was a four-hour jog, and the young priest prayed to God whom he carried on his breast that the boy might hold out until he arrived. He had seen how a child sickens and passes so rapidly into death.

It was a hard ride and a long one. The last few hundred yards the priest let out his horse, for the sun had gone down and it was cooler. At the sick boy's dwelling he drew up with a jerk. His jaw dropped in utter amazement. There upon the ladder sat young Carlos, dexterously flicking a yo-yo up and down. He looked as sound and healthy as an unused rubber tire.

"Aren't you sick, Carlos?" he finally managed.

"Yesterday, Faddaire, but not today," was the reply, and the boy came down and held the horse's head.

"Well, I'll be peeled and parboiled," the priest muttered as he slipped slowly from the saddle. A four-hour ride through blistering heat for this! He slowly unscrewed the cap from his canteen and drank.

"Come in, Faddaire," Carlos invited, "there is mango."

"Uh-huh," the priest said absently, "afterward." He sat down on the ladder and listened to the boy's story about his "feeber." Surely the Lord had not sent him on this wild-goose chase merely to test his patience. He would see if there was not work to do here. "Is anyone else sick in the village?" he propounded hesitantly to Carlos.

"Yes, Faddaire," was the immediate reply, "there is that one, th-a-a-t old lady."

"Bring me to her," was the priest's order.

The boy led him to a small hut within which an old woman lay stretched on a mat. One glimpse at her blue lips, her pinched features, and her labored breathing, convinced the priest that the sands were running out for her. He heard her confession and administered Viaticum. When he drew forth the holy oils she began to protest as vehemently as her weakened condition allowed.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Don't want the holy oils," was the feeble protest.

He soon discovered that she labored under the erroneous idea that Extreme Unction was the final touch, sealing one's doom, that the reception of it automatically compelled the person to die, that it was, in short, the last push to get one over the dark brink. Despite his fatigue and desire for immediate return, the priest explained how the sacrament works, that oftentimes it brings not only strength to the soul but also healing to the body. But the old woman was adamant. Her daughter supported her in her protests. Regretfully the priest had to leave the hut and turn his horse's head homeward. The old woman died next day.

He lost the trail for a while in the dark and returned so late that he barely managed to get two or three hours of sleep before his Mass. A hasty breakfast of oatmeal and bananas did not tend to freshen him up. Some baptisms; a group of pagans from the mountains requesting instructions; a catechist returned from the Bañan district with an exten-

sive report of the number ready for baptism, of two couples for marriage, of things needed, medicine, holy pictures, *carmelitos* for the children, his wages. The priest jotted down notes and told the catechist to return that evening for further instructions. Ramon made him some coffee. A messenger came with word that an old deaf fellow who lived on the outskirts of the town was dying. The dying man had shown some interest in the Catholic religion. Would the Padre come? He would. Again the sun, creaking leather, the strong salty smell of horse sweat, clouds of stifling dust.

Midday found him back at the *convento*. He waved aside Ramon's summons to dinner. Making his way to his room he stripped off his dank clothes and tumbled into bed.

Awaking late in the afternoon he found himself dull, listless, and heavily bathed in perspiration. He pulled on his clothes and went out onto the veranda. He stopped short at sight of Father Miguel sprawled out in a chair and eating a huge piece of *papaya*.

"Apo," Edward exclaimed. "Back?"

Father Miguel set down the piece of *papaya*, wiped his mouth with a handkerchief and grinned like a boy. He had been off on a several weeks' trip through one of his mountain districts. "Got back an hour ago," he confessed. "I called but you didn't answer. So I let you sleep."

"I had a call to Bauan this morning," Edward explained, "and another one yesterday that kept me out half the night."

"Still sleepy?" the older missionary asked.

"Dull, like wet rags." The young priest rubbed the palm of his hand over his eyes and forehead.

"Mon!" Father Miguel called out. "Water for baño," he ordered.

"Yes, Faddaire."

"Go down and throw a few cans of water over yourself," Father Miguel advised the young priest.

Twenty minutes later Edward was back. "I feel fit as a trivet now," he declared.

"I don't know that word. But water is a wonderful thing — for a bath," Father Miguel acknowledged. "I took a dip in the Alva River this morning. How did things go while I was away?"

Edward summed up for him the notable events of the past two weeks. The older priest ate steadily his piece of *papaya*, his face brown and lean from long days of riding and weeks of meager fare; his eyes, alert and interested, responded to the news with a gleam, a darkening or a thoughtful stare. When the young priest told of how he had lost his way on the trail the previous night, Father Miguel beamed on him.

"We are in the same boat. I lost my way too," he observed.

"At night?"

"Yes, at night. But it was different. There is one town called Rilka that needs special attention," he began. "I stayed for an extra day and sent Aventino on ahead to Tubao to wait there for me. I would come maybe eight hours later. It is nightfall when I leave Rilka." He sliced open another *papaya*. "There is a funny fork in that road out of Rilka. One of the trails goes to Tubao and the other goes . . . well, it just goes. There are clouds over the moon when I come to that point but I know which is the right trail and I ride right on. I ride and ride and no light appears. It should be Tubao now. I begin to think I have lost my way. Under some palms I rest until dawn is coming. Slowly and stiffly I climb up the tallest palm tree. Ai, yai, that was a job! I look off in the distance — the dawn; I look down and there is Tubao!"

"You were right close to it all night, Father?"

Father Miguel nodded and gulped down a mouthful of *papaya*. "Ten more minutes and I would have been in the village. But wait, listen. When I looked down from my tree I see some natives standing outside the huts. They are looking right up at me. I wave my arm wildly. What do the sheepsheads do? They run back into their huts. I come down the tree — too fast I come. See, I patch my pants with safety

pins. I get on my horse and start to ride. Suddenly I stop. I cannot go in and tell Aventino that I sit outside the village all night. He will always make jokes about it. I find a small path that circles the village and enters it from the other side. Quietly I go to our little chapel. Aventino is not there. I get into bed. I wake up at midday. I am up and around when Aventino comes. He enters the chapel, behind him a whole procession of the village's leaders.

"Apo!" the spokesman explained, "you must bless the village this afternoon or something terrible will happen to us. The *demonio* (devil) wants to do something bad to us. This morning, Apo, very early, he was seen looking over our village."

"Where?" I asked.

"In the big palm tree, outside the village. He was all black, with long black hair and white rings around his eyes. When he see us he waved a claw at us, a claw as big as the sickle to cut the rice. The sun rose and then he is gone."

"Hm," I said and look at my fingernails. "Let me see; let me see. He had his eye on the village, eh? Good, I bless the village. But I don't think he comes again. He is afraid of the Catholic priest and if he knows we come to the village, I bet you he don't come."

"I blessed the village. It needed a blessing, anyhow."

Edward laughed heartily. "I suppose I am not to tell Aventino about this?"

"Absolutely, not!" Father Miguel declared forcibly. "He can be a rascal sometimes, that Aventino."

Father Miguel picked up a letter from the table. "We are to receive a visitor tomorrow," he announced. "Father Van Rosselmann, the Superior of a Congregation that has taken up the Kalinga province. He wants to make a *pasear* (trip) through our stations and see how we go about our work."

The missionaries of San Vicente welcomed Father Van Rosselmann with that cordiality which makes all missionaries kin. They found him a benign personage in whom the enthus-

iasms of youth had cooled into a patriarchal calm. The first thing the missionaries noticed about him was the lengthy pipe, gleaming black from long use, fixed into a corner of his broad ruddy face as if it were as permanent as his bulbous nose or his luxuriant full white beard. He explained to his host that he had never done any broncho busting and that his preference in the line of horseflesh ran to something meek, docile, and sedentary. Father Miguel asked Edward to have Nightmare saddled.

"Nightmare?" the visitor asked. "That does not sound very sedentary to me."

Father Miguel chuckled. "That horse walks in his sleep."

The Reverend Van Rosselmann, accompanied by his two hosts, rode along in stoical calm, his pipe sending forth its trail of smoke behind him, his curtain of a beard swaying in the breeze. Nightmare behaved well and would have gone down in the annals as a Pullman type of horse if it had not been for the Pagman River.

It was at that unpleasant time of the year when there remains but a runlet of water in the center of the stream. Both sides of the runlet were flanked with flats of mud, cracked and baked hard at the extreme edges. Near the runlet the mud was an oozy, sticky mixture with the staying qualities of fish glue. The missionaries defiled across the river. At the edge of the opposite bank Father Miguel directed his horse toward a big boulder. The wiry beast scrambled up, and using it as a base leaped up to the steep bank. Edward followed hard upon his heels. Nightmare, the last to attempt the crossing, made exceedingly slow progress through the mud. His rider continued puffing his pipe. At length Nightmare came to the rock. Instead of taking the brisk little leap upward that was required to bring him on the solid bank he seemed to lapse into a state of coma; his rear legs began to fold up.

Father Miguel shouted at the horse. Edward yelled to the rider.

In vain. Horse and rider maintained an unruffled calm. Slowly, very, very slowly Nightmare's hind legs continued to collapse. Finally the animal was sitting on its haunches like a circus horse. The imperturbable rider continued to smoke, but the puffs of smoke were now nervous little bursts. As the horse settled back the Reverend Van Rosselmann slipped gradually toward its tail. With a slight jolt Nightmare settled firmly on its haunches. Its rider tobogganed off its rear and sat in the river mud.

Father Miguel went into action immediately. When finally drawn up to terra firma, Father Van Rosselmann, covered with mud, was a sorry spectacle. His first action was to remove the pipe from his mouth and address a few words to Nightmare, in Dutch. Edward did not know Dutch. Neither did Nightmare. Father Miguel, however, knew the language of Nightmare's crass old carcass; leaning down the bank he fetched the animal a resounding thwack with a bamboo pole. With a jump the horse came up the bank like a comet with a tail of mud.

"It isn't exactly dry cleaning," Edward observed when he saw Father Van Rosselmann arrayed again in his dried garments.

"And he doesn't look like a Superior of any Congregation," Father Miguel said.

"But he smells like a fisher of souls," laughed Father Van Rosselmann good-humoredly.

No further mishap marked the trip, but their guest had evidently not allowed the occurrence to slip his memory. When the three dismounted some days later before the *convento* of San Vicente, Father Van Rosselmann removed his pipe slowly from his mouth. Pointing its stem judicially at Nightmare he addressed Father Miguel. "Father," he said very gravely, "shoot — that — horse — dead. I shall pay for the bullet."

Chapter 23

THE rainy season was again approaching. At Laban the project for a new chapel was proceeding at a snail's pace. Edward had procured money from friends at home for the corrugated-iron roofing and for a church bell; the beams and the erection of the building had been promised by the Tipucans as their share toward the House of God.

Father Miguel superintended the transportation of the roofing to San Vicente. He decided to go to Laban and bring some men to pack the sheets of roofing over the trails. Some days later he returned alone.

"Why, what's wrong?" was Edward's astonished greeting. "Wouldn't the men come?"

Father Miguel threw the reins to the waiting boy. "We're in a bad box," he replied, wiping his brow with the back of his sleeve. "They've been loafing on the job. Only half the timbers are up. The rest of the timbers are still lying out on the mountainside." He began walking into the *convento*, his steps stiff from weariness, his face crinkled with worry.

"I don't see that there is anything to worry about, Father," his young assistant said.

"But there is . . . plenty," the other insisted, flinging himself irritably into a chair. "The rainy season! It is here in a week and half at the least. Before the rains start the building must be roofed. Otherwise the typhoons knock down the timbers, the white ants and rain spoil the wood."

"What shall we do about it?"

"I sent the whole village up to the mountains to bring in the timbers — *cas — cas* — (very quick) and put them up as fast as they can. But that leaves us no men for hauling the roofing."

"Can't you get some men from here?"

"I think I can get four," Father Miguel nodded. "but no more; and they have to go on foot. I have all the carpenters from here working at Laban, dressing the timbers, joining them, putting them up. It's slow work. Everything is done by hand. And these old tools they have!" He made a gesture of weariness. "The rest of the men are busy felling timbers up in the mountains and will float them down with the first rains."

"How will you get the roofing there?"

Father Miguel rose. "I shall eat my dinner first. Then if you watch, you shall see."

In spite of his worries, the veteran missionary ate heartily. After dinner he procured some burlap bags. Folding them up compactly he strapped them over his back and shoulders, and taking his sun helmet walked out of the house toward the pile of roofing. With his big hands he pulled two strips of the corrugated iron from the pile. "I am getting on my horse," he told his assistant. "As soon as I am mounted I will bend forward. You have the boys place these two pieces of roofing on my back."

"You won't be able to handle it," the young priest objected.

"Oh yes, I will. Here's a rope. When I am mounted I'll tell you how to tie our roof on my back."

Edward made a rather clumsy job of it. Nothing daunted, Father Miguel rode off.

Some hours later he returned. "I brought it as far as the river," he announced. "Four men can carry it from there to Laban. It's only a short distance. I'll feed them and they can relay the roofing in to Laban."

"Couldn't I go along next trip?" Edward asked. "I think I can carry my quota."

"If you think you can stand it. That tin square on your back is just like a hot frying pan."

Edward did not mind the first two or three trips. After three days of ceaseless trudging back and forth he grew tired in every bone and sinew. The heat was pitiless. To avoid tangling the large squares of metal on their backs with bamboo and vegetation, they were forced to take the exposed trails. The sun beat with full power upon the shining pieces of corrugated iron. The young priest sweated and grew dizzy beneath his burning load. The lashings worked loose and cut into his shoulders, his sides, his chest. Blood came. With strips from a clean handkerchief he packed vaseline around the cuts. His back ached from the perpetual bending. Despite all the pain he found time to admire the ceaseless patience, the unbounding strength of his seasoned companion.

On the fifth day Edward was so utterly worn out that he thought of declaring a day of rest, but he remembered that this was just the sort of hardship he had craved. He could not refuse the chance to offer up a trifling inconvenience, to do a little reparation. He noticed that Father Miguel, too, showed signs of fatigue. There was not so much left to transport any more, but he would not care to think of Father Miguel doing it all alone while he lounged in bed.

They made one trip. Back at the *convento* they ate lunch and then buckled on another load. Edward's horse jolted forward and stumbled a bit. The young priest brought him up sharply. "Musn't fall with this on my back," he mused, "break my neck. Poor Tinto," he commiserated, "I guess he's weary too." He tried to adjust the rope. "Ought to stop and do it properly," he thought, "but no boys here to help. We're almost there. Let it go." After a while he grew feverish and muttered to himself about his "tin cross" and "climbing Calvary on horseback." Far in the lead, Father Miguel did not hear him. A sudden pitch of the horse brought the loose

rope across his shoulder like a searing iron. "God, he was thirsty. Well, at the river, he'd drink. No, he'd swim. A drink wasn't enough. He was thirst all over. This wringing and perpetual sweat. . . .

If only that river would come into sight! You build something — it takes pain, and sweat, and blood — otherwise it's no good; it dies. "I am glad, Jesus, for this rope," muttered the tired priest. "Let it cut more . . . just give me the nerve to hang on. Don't care about the heat and thirst . . . only in my church . . . put the fire of Your love in the hearts of those that come. . . ." He laughed a bit. He tried to sing but there was song only in his heart. His dried throat gave forth no sound. . . .

"River!" he heard Father Miguel shout. Dropping off his horse he slipped out of the ropes that bound him to his burden. The older missionary stiff-legged up to him and helped him rid himself of the sheets of roofing. "One rope loose here," Father Miguel observed. "Bet your shoulder's bleeding again."

Father Miguel went over to his horse. "I got some grease here," he began, "that we better —"

Splash!

The older man whirled around. Edward, fully clothed, was in a deep pool of the river. In a flash Father Miguel was at the river's edge and had grasped the young priest by the clothes and hauled him up, dripping, on the bank. Forcing his assistant into a sitting position he began to unlace his outtees and shoes.

"Guess I was dreaming about the water all the way," Edward mused listlessly. "Did I fall in?" he asked suddenly.

"Take off your clothes," Father Miguel said briskly. "Can you manage?"

"Why, sure."

"Then get back into the pool and soak for a while."

His shoulder was a mess. The bloodied flesh had formed into scabs. The ropes had first abraded and then torn away

the scabs, taking also the flesh and portions of the skin. After the young missionary had recovered from his touch of the sun by a half-hour session in the cool river, Father Miguel dressed the lacerated shoulder, first tearing strips off his shirt and soaking it in the river until he had a moist and clean bandage.

All the way back Father Miguel was silent. When their horses were on the outskirts of San Vicente he turned to his companion. "Edward, I think you will have to stay home this afternoon and tomorrow," he announced.

With an uplifted hand Father Miguel forestalled the young priest's objection. He had seen that diplomacy would be necessary with this eager young spirit. "I know you are recovered. I am expecting a sick call from over Panglan. They will send a messenger. You better stay and tend to the old lady if the call comes. I kind of feel that she will be in need very soon."

"All right, Father," acquiesced the young priest. Sometimes obedience had its bright side.

Late that afternoon Edward awoke to the patter of rain on the roof. He was stiff and sore. His shoulder hurt. Now as he lay listening to the rain, he thought of his companion. He knew how difficult it was to travel those trails in dry weather, let alone when they were cascading with water. The rain came slanting down with renewed vigor. By six o'clock it was a hard drumming downpour. Then with tropical suddenness it ceased.

"Thank heavens, it's ended," the young priest muttered. He began to conjure up all sorts of disturbing pictures of Father Miguel at the bottom of a gully or sprawled out in a ravine with his horse flattened out beside him and the sheets of corrugated iron bent and twisted into fantastic shapes. The cllop of a tired horse's hooves brought him hastily out of bed and sent him running to the window. In a moment his thoughts of Father Miguel suffered an eclipse.

"Apooool" came the hail.

"Apo," he replied and donning a cassock hastened out on the veranda. A bedraggled, mud-spattered figure sat athwart a jaded mount. "What is it?" the priest asked nervously.

"Dying . . . the holy oils."

"Who? Who?"

"Tha-a-t one. In Panglan."

"You will show me the way there?"

"Of course, Apo," the man replied simply. "That's why I come."

"Good man!" The priest turned to Ramon who as usual was at his elbows, all ears and all eyes. "'Mon, get Tinto ready and bring a fresh horse for this man."

A few minutes later the horses slogged forth into the mud of the roadway, the man leading. A night of utter blackness had descended. The rain had ceased. All about them as they climbed the mountains they could hear the water dripping from the dense foliage. The horses slid and scrambled and fought for a footing. The two men made no attempt to accelerate their pace. They staggered up slopes and slid down declivities, the priest's flashlight a tiny glow in the starless night.

They had ridden for an hour when their horses began to grunt and heave at the foot of a sharp incline. Flashing his light upwards, Edward saw ahead of him a narrow path that crawled over a spur of the mountain. The rain had left this trail strewn with loose rocks and slimy mud. Edward just flashed his light ahead in time to see his messenger's horse dig in valiantly and make the summit. Then the blackness beyond swallowed them up. Laboriously he followed, using knee and rein to help wherever he could. Finally he was at the very crest and Tinto put forward a front leg to top the ridge. At that moment the pony's rear hooves slipped, and the beast made a convulsive attempt to jump forward and gain the top. The effort shot both hind legs from under him; the animal reared over backwards. Rider and horse thudded and crashed down the entire length of the incline.

Edward awoke to a blinding light in his eyes.

"Apo, apo!" a voice whimpered at his side. Vaguely the priest heard the voice.

"What — oh, where is it — the light!" he groaned, and the light moved away from his face. He tried to lift himself up with his hands, but fierce, sickening pain shot through him. Now he remembered — the top of that incline. "Boy," he whispered.

"Apo," and the boy's tear-stained face was thrust into his line of vision.

"My horse . . . Tinto?"

"The legs are broken" came the reply. "It is there." He swung the flashlight on the stricken horse some yards distant, its head reared high in fright.

"Then . . . then . . ." what must he say? God — how this pain . . . "go back . . . help, get help . . . I . . ." He slumped in the mud.

When he regained consciousness, blackness was all about him. He groped for the flashlight. His fingers found only mud and loose stones. A whistling scream of pain told him where his unfortunate horse lay. The sound of its efforts to rise awoke fears of its lashing hooves finding his own broken body. He must move. His right leg was broken. Slowly he lifted himself with hands and tried to pull himself along. Abruptly he fainted.

The splash of raindrops brought him back to his pain again. His head was lying in the mud of the trail. Something was broken inside of him. He lay in the mud and blackness, the soft rain fingering his face, and knives of suffering running through him. "O God . . . help, send me help . . ." He had thought only for his immediate pain.

After a long time his mind seemed to clear. He found himself muttering ". . . Buck up, soldier of Christ. It's dark, oh, but it's dark . . . and wet . . . and this snaky mud . . . in my face, my mouth . . . my eyes. I can't see, but I can make it . . . I'll make it. . . ."

Pain swallowed him again and blotted out all consciousness. . . .

Father Miguel rode that night as no sane man should on wet trails. When he found his assistant spread-eagled in the mud, the right leg twisted unnaturally beneath him, tears coursed freely down his cheeks. He knelt beside Edward in the mud and lifted the head up to anoint it. The face was muddied and cut beyond all recognition.

Once in the course of the toilsome journey back Edward regained consciousness. Immediately Father Miguel bent over the litter. At sight of his drawn face the wounded man managed a ghost of a smile. "Is this the Resurrection?" came the weakly murmured question.

"No, Edward," the other replied. "You're in a litter. You'll soon be home," he assured him. The litter jolted heavily. "Oh . . ." a groan came from the litter.

Father Miguel halted the carriers. "Here — take these — aspirins . . . they are all I got with me. It will help against the pain."

Edward closed his eyes in refusal. "Don't . . . want. I'll take it straight. . . ." He tried to smile but the grimace died in the oblivion of unconsciousness.

Chapter 24

OPPOSITE Santo Rosario Church, in the very heart of Manila's Walled City, stands the Hospital of San Pablo. It is a two-storied Spanish edifice. Its old, stone walls are pierced with barred windows high off the ground. Overhanging balconies jut over the narrow sidewalk. The building has only one entrance: a wide-arched opening, two steps up from the pavement. Through this portal the sick are brought into a cool, dark cavern of a lobby. Two dim full-length paintings of Spanish bishops peer out of gloom-filled corners. A reception desk at the far end of the cavern guards another arched entrance, leading to the hospital proper. A Sister in a graceful white flowing habit was sitting at the desk. A Filipino was thumbing a directory at the adjacent switchboard.

"Father Harrison is not listed, Sister Regina," he said.

"Then call Father Mulligan at the seminary," the Sister ordered. "He'll be able to contact Father Harrison, I'm sure."

"Yes, Sister. And the message?"

"Tell him Father Courtney needs. . . . No; if it is Father Mulligan just tell him there's a sick priest here, a friend of Father Harrison's."

Sister Regina turned from the desk and passed through the arched entrance into the hospital. One side of the corridor looked out upon a patio filled with flowers: jasmine, bougainvillea on trellises, the ilan-ilan, the perfume tree

known as *dama de noche* (lady of the night). Beneath a fire tree, glorious with its vivid red blossoms, stood a statue of the Sacred Heart. The sunlight from the patio touched the Sister's face framed in its white coronet. Her brow was smooth and fair beneath the neat linen band of the head-dress. Her eyes were of a light gray that could become blue with sympathy or agate with command. As she gazed out on the garden her mouth softened. A long time had passed since she had come to these shores. She fingered the large silver medal suspended from her neck. Her eyes lifted to the statue. She had a big family waiting for her upstairs. Up the broad, shiny, wood staircase of black molave she swept, slender and small of figure but stately as a queen.

The second floor was Sister Regina's domain. A young Filipina nurse hastened to her. "Sister Regina, the patient in Ward One insulted me this morning." The nurse hastened to recount the incident.

"And what did you do, Leoncia?"

"I — I slap him."

Sister Regina went to Ward One. The offender was a burly seaman. The Sister stood at the foot of his bed. Silently she looked at him. The man grew uncomfortable.

"Our nurses are trained to help the sick, not to be the butt of insults," said the Sister quietly, firmly. "There is another hospital in this city." She left the seaman. His face was a deep red. Sister Regina called Leoncia. "Have Theodoro, the male nurse, give the patient in Ward One his medication from now on."

"Yes, Sister," was the grateful reply.

The Sister went to the chartroom. The charts were inspected, the assignments of nurses made. Father Courtney's chart showed a poor night. She went to his room.

"Why, Father," she exclaimed, "you look radiant this morning."

"The barber's fault, Sister. He just did a job on me."

"Your first shave in how long — a week?"

"That's right, Sister. I'm here more than a week. I'd like to talk to someone. I can't sleep at night."

"We'll soon take care of that, Father."

Edward's eyes followed her as she disappeared behind the screen at the open door. Then his gaze circled the big, high-ceilinged room. Two chairs, a small table at the right of his bed, to his left two large windows permitting a view of century-old, blackened masonry, the rear wall of Santo Rosario Church. Broad planks of polished hardwood made up the floor. In a corner there was a clothespress; on the wall opposite him a crucifix. His eyes came to rest on his leg suspended in a traction splint. He reached for the mirror left on his table by the barber. That shave had been a difficult job. The stitches in the cut over his eye were still in and there was a faint discoloration about the eye. "It must have been a glorious shiner," he said aloud. The other lacerations on his face were fairly well healed. He put the mirror back on the table.

A light step sounded at the door. "The doctor, Father," Sister Regina announced.

"All right, Sister," the patient sighed.

The Sister stepped aside to let a cassocked figure into the room.

"Why, Fred!" the patient ejaculated, his face lighting up joyously.

"Oh-oh!" Sister Regina cautioned as he struggled to sit upright. "Stay as you were, Father, or I shall send Father Harrison right home." She drew up a chair for Father Harrison and then arranged the invalid's pillows.

"May I smoke, Sister?" asked the visitor.

"Certainly, Father," she replied, straightening up from her task and putting back the veil which had slipped over her shoulder, "and have a good chat together. I'll be back presently." She left the room.

"You must have had a Miraculous Medal in every pocket," Father Harrison commented, gazing at the figure in bed.

The invalid grinned. "Only one — around my neck. Father Miguel declares I should have broken my neck instead of that," he pointed a finger at the suspended leg.

Father Harrison lit a cigarette.

"That little doctor in Bañao that set the leg missed a few strokes," Edward said. "I guess I'll be a pilay (lame one) for the rest of my earthly career."

Father Harrison took his cigarette from his mouth. "No?" he ejaculated. "He didn't mess you up that badly?"

"That's what the surgeon here said. Badly set, and there were splinters of bone. So they operated. They took me apart and sewed up a few things that were punctured. I am nothing but a rebuilt typewriter now, I guess."

"Your trip down here was tough, I bet."

The young priest nodded assent. "I don't like to think of that part of it. They got an auto for me but you can't eliminate all the bumps in a mountain road. My leg was the size of a baby zeppelin. I was sweating all the way, cold sweat. When the leg got too bad the little doctor gave me the needle. I was fuddled with dope when I got here."

"You can certainly thank God that you came out of it alive. And with both your legs," Father Harrison declared earnestly.

"Even if one of them is going to carry a limp?"

"What of it? St. Francis Xavier had a limp."

"Oh-oh," laughed the invalid. "Your comparison limps. Francis Xavier got his limp from too much mortification."

"Well then, how about St. Ignatius Loyola? He had a limp too."

"Say-a-y, where are you putting me? Those men were saints. I just fell off a horse."

"In the line of duty. And you can think of that every time the limp bothers you."

"But that's not going to make it any easier getting around, Fred. A man needs two sturdy arms and two tireless legs in this mission work."

"I know that well enough," his visitor agreed. "I had a classmate with me in China who couldn't stand their sanitation methods. One day he confided to me that if he had foreseen the conditions under which he was to work he would have begged the Creator to dispense with his nose and grant him an extra pair of arms and legs instead."

"That's the most practical petition I've heard yet, Fred. But I think I have found out that what Father Miguel once told me is solidly true: 'It's not only the body of a man that counts, it's the heart, the spirit that's in him.'"

"I'll not gainsay that," was the quiet reply. Father Harrison smoked quietly for a while and gazed idly out the window, at the weathered wall of the ancient Spanish church across the way. He turned back to the sick priest: "You're not going back to that same post when you can get around, are you?"

Edward looked up at him quickly. "Why not?"

"Well, you did well enough up there, from what I hear. But to my way of thinking you are wasting peculiar talents in those wilds. You are better suited for student work, retreats, missions, formative work, you know."

"Oh," Edward said slowly, "I thought you were going to object because of my leg."

"That is a point too," Father Harrison agreed, "but I don't think that registers with you." He studied the invalid's face. It had grown thinner, and weeks in the hospital had left it white. Pain had traced thin lines about the mouth but the eyes were serene and clear. Suddenly he asked: "Ed, do you really like that work up there in the back of beyond?"

At the abrupt query a startled look fled across Edward's face. He pulled his pillow under his head. "Can you tell me anything higher than that job of mine?" he countered.

"What I am driving at," the visitor replied, "is whether you, speaking frankly as one friend to another, think that you are fitted for that sort of labor, and that kind of exist-

ence? Can you see yourself plugging away at it year in, year out, and feeling satisfied?"

The invalid was silent for a few moments. "No," he said finally, "I can't see myself plugging away at it year in, year out. By nature no man is fitted for that sort of life. It's a life that demands more than any of us, even the toughest, has got. We have to have something in addition. Some men are more fitted for it than others, I admit, but Christ calls whom He wills. If the urge is there in my heart, how can I say no to it?" He paused and ran his tongue lightly around his lips.

A big fat figure appeared around the corner of the screen. "May I come in?" came a hoarse whisper.

Edward laughed aloud. "Father Mulligan! Welcome, welcome!"

The stout priest tiptoed cautiously to the foot of the priest's bed. "You all right?" he asked, looking dubiously at the invalid.

"Why, sure!"

Father Mulligan, all bulges and perspiration in his black cassock, dragged a chair up to the bedside. "Those Sisters talked like you were on the very verge of the dark abyss. They had me scared. Why do they talk that way?"

"They always do," Father Harrison interjected, "when they see you coming."

The stout priest turned on him and looked at him in mock scorn. "And who let you in?" Without waiting for a reply he went on. "I got past Sister Regina," he boasted. "Boy, is that lady a tartar . . . wow! You would think I wanted to swipe their operating table or the X-ray department. All the questions she asked me. They can't see me," he complained. "I don't know why."

"Neither do I. You're visible enough," Father Harrison commented.

"Young man, silence," Father Mulligan ordered, fixing him with a glassy stare. "But those Sisters," he continued turning back to Edward, "if anyone is dying at one thirty

in the middle of the night, they always call me!" He wagged his head.

"Maybe you haven't got the proper bedside manner," the invalid chuckled.

"I haven't," he consented with a vigorous nod. He paused and his eyes twinkled. "But I have some Peruvian pottery." He dove a pudgy hand into his cassock and brought forth a little brown bottle. "That's San Miguel beer. How's it look?"

The sick man stretched forth a hand. At that moment a vision in white swept into the room. "Well . . . what is this?" asked Sister Regina, pausing abruptly to stare at the bottle that was exchanging hands.

"Oh, my sainted aunt!" moaned Father Mulligan.

"What is this?" demanded the nun.

"Sister," explained the donor glibly, "it's a tonic stimulant widely recommended by eminent physicians both here and abroad. Its main ingredients are malt and hops with a judicious amount of fermentation."

"None of your Brooklyn blarney; what is it?"

"Why, I've just told you. Beer!"

"Heavens above," ejaculated the Sister. "Are you trying to ruin the good name of our hospital, Father Mulligan? Don't you know there are strict rules about bringing alcoholic beverages in to patients?"

"Now, Sister, listen. This patient rates a drink of beer at least once a month, doesn't he. He's attained his majority . . . Aw . . ." Father Mulligan finished his ejaculation beneath his breath as the nun possessed herself of the bottle.

"Decanterbury pilgrim!" she reprimanded, but as she turned to go her mouth quirked at the corners. Edward could not control his face; he knew the bottle would be on his supper tray, but he would ask Sister Regina to save it for some other patient.

Father Mulligan looked dejectedly at the floor. "That's a woman for you," he lifted his head. "An ounce of statement

and a ton of insinuation. Decanter-bury pilgrim!" he snorted. It's the limit. Everytime I try to do a good turn I get it right in my fat neck."

"That's right," Father Harrison chimed in. "I was wondering if you would add the adjective."

"Get behind me, you walking advertisement for tooth-picks," the stout priest said. "Say," he asked, "is she always like that?" he jerked his head toward the door through which Sister Regina had departed.

"Not at all," Edward assured him. "She's swell. She even got the kitchen force to concoct a real ice-cream soda for me one day. She had the whole hospital, nurses, sisters, and doctors worrying and working over me like I was an admiral or an archbishop or something."

"Uh-huh," Father Mulligan grunted doubtfully. "Maybe it is true. I mean, that nobody loves a fat man. Well, you'd better pray for me."

"You pray for him," Father Harrison cut in. He rose to his feet. "Come on, let's go."

"Take your time," the stout priest counseled. "We're not only bootleggers. We're also visitors. You know," he went on in a serious voice, "I've been praying for you every day, Ed, and God is impartial and listens to everyone's prayers, even a fat man's."

"Thanks, old sport," said Edward as he shook hands, "and do come again."

"If I can get through the Sistine Line," he agreed. He held Edward's hand a minute and then suddenly bent over him. "I hate hospitals, Father," he confided, ". . . they smell of boiled socks!"

Edward laughed till the bed shook. "Tell that to Sister Regina on the way out," he called as Father Mulligan waddled toward the door.

The stout priest stopped. "Want to get me suspended? She's got enough on me now . . . fat . . . ferrying beer to those with broken bones . . . and if I told her what her hospi-

tal really smells like she'd call it foul language, although it's the words her own mother used. She'd tell the Archbishop and get me deported to the San Ramon Penal Colony or put me in a monastery threading needles for a month. . . ." He waved his hand. "God love you," and he was gone.

That afternoon the doctor, a small, thin mestizo, removed the stitches from the cut over his eye. A dexterous pair of hands the medico had, efficient and gentle. The nurses were all attention.

Sister Regina came to him in the late afternoon. "Stitches out, Father?" She held her hands behind her back.

"Yes, Sister, and they did a grand job," he answered. "What are you hiding behind your back? Ice-cream soda?"

"Heavens, no. It's a letter."

Eagerly he seized it. "Father Miguel!" he announced. "Hurray! Here, Sister, open it for me, please."

Sister Regina drew her scissors and slit the envelope. Avidly he began to read, forgetting the Sister's presence. She stole quietly from the room. The letter was all details, activity, work. It distressed him. "I belong up there," he told himself. "My blundering awkwardness has cut off weeks, months of work, has doubled Father Miguel's burden. What a useless specimen I am! A missionary just a year and I kill his best horse and almost kill myself. A helper? At least I must get him the money to pay for Tinto. I'm lying here like a clod. How long is this going to go on?"

The night brought no sleep. The nurse put blinders over his eyes with medicated pads beneath. That only threw him in upon his thoughts more fully. He could hear the clanging traffic, the life surging in the street below his window. The nurse finally gave him a sedative.

At seven o'clock the next morning the nurse came to give him his morning care. "Nurse," he suddenly burst out, "how much longer are they going to keep me in bed?"

The little nurse looked alarmed. Recovering quickly she murmured a lot of platitudes about the period required for

fractured bones and ribs and hernias to heal. She left him in a bad frame of mind. He thought he had best have a try at the leg. He pushed himself into a sitting position, pulled up the weights on to the bed and worked his leg loose. He got it over the edge of the bed. With the aid of a chair he got himself upright. At that moment Sister Regina came in. In one swift movement she was at his side.

"Good heavens! What is the matter, Father?"

He colored and grasped the chair more tightly. "I want to get back to work, Sister," he said doggedly.

"It's that letter you got," she stated, divining the cause of the trouble.

"Well, not only that. I want to be doing things."

"Come now, Father. Listen to me." Gently she coaxed him back into bed, then she sat in a chair and began to talk. With sympathetic understanding she went to the core of the trouble. The priest did not remember all she said but it must have been what he needed to hear. The fit of impatience passed. Sister Regina summoned a doctor and the leg was rigged in its traction splint again. He dropped off to sleep.

That same day Father Harrison came to a decision. His talk with Edward had not been very satisfying to him. He determined to see Edward's Provincial. A short time later he was seated in the Provincial's office.

"I visited Father Courtney yesterday," he began. "You'll pardon me, Father, if what I say may appear a bit impertinent."

"I am sure it will be nothing of the sort," the white-haired Provincial assured him. "You are good friends, I know."

"Exactly, Father. Although we don't belong to the same Congregation, I've been a friend of his a few years. In fact, since his arrival. We have corresponded quite a bit."

"He has told me that," nodded his listener. "I encouraged it. You see," he smiled, "you have quite a good character with me."

"That makes it easier, then," Father Harrison replied. He proceeded to state his conviction that Father Courtney was wasted in the career of an itinerant missionary and that his address and geniality, his devotedness and his learning would easily achieve treble the amount of results in the higher circles of natives where good and capable priests were so sorely needed. The white-headed Provincial heard him to the end.

"I can only be grateful to you, Father," he said very simply, "for what you have told me. It is quite true. Father Courtney is eminently fitted for work among the educated Filipinos. But he has just asked to be assigned to our new mission field, the Island of Mangan."

"Mangan?"

"Yes," said the other. "Very primitive and worse than San Vicente. I have agreed to grant him a post there."

"But why, why, Father?"

"Souls like that must go their own way," the old priest explained gravely. "I am convinced that he purposely desires the sacrifices that the isolated missionary's life demands. We don't lose, nor does the work of souls here in the Islands lose, by assigning him to that work. The merit of his sacrifice brings greater fruit perhaps than his work in a more congenial post would."

"That's true, I suppose, Father, but it is hard to see such a spirit breaking itself on the rough rocks of that life."

"We mustn't look at it from that viewpoint alone," the other protested. "When the Creator Spirit wants to fashion a masterpiece He takes bits of things, useless things. He accomplishes His purpose so there can be no pride in the completed thing of beauty because it realizes what its own initial insignificance was. He buries the seed, the seed then dies, so that the glory of a tree may appear. He crumbles a body into dust that from its nothingness and pain He may raise a saint of God."

Father Harrison made no reply.

Chapter 25

THE interisland steamer was drifting slowly to its moorings when Edward awoke and caught his first glimpse of the Island of Mangan: loveliness, palm fringed, with salt-white shores of sand. From the island's center rose a cluster of mountains.

Soon he was in the bus for Calapan. The pedestrians on the shore road were, for the most part, native women, balancing on their heads baskets of foodstuffs, jars filled with water, and even bundles of clothes. A coronal of wet rags beneath their burden served as a base; though they chattered to each other or herded their children away from the oncoming bus, they seemed never to think of the weight on their heads. Edward had never yet ceased to marvel at this feature of life in the Islands. Never had he seen a woman lose control of these unwieldy burdens. He was pleased now when some of them, seeing a priest in the bus, lifted the burdens from their heads in greeting.

At dusk the bus deposited him before a dilapidated house in Calapan. The edifice looked as though it had been struck by a typhoon; it had not been able to sink to final rest but must hang precariously balanced, as if it might collapse at any moment. As soon as he descended from the bus two boys ran toward him. They kissed his hands, they knocked the back of his hand on their foreheads, and finally they fought for possession of his satchel.

"Abál" he exclaimed, "what are your names, *pillots*?" The taller of the two drew himself up and recited: "My name is Jeremias Benedicto Rosales. This one is Rosalino."

"You know my name?" the priest asked.

"Padre Eduardo," they chorused. "Americano."

Edward laughed. "Well, I am baptized already, I see. All right, *sigue!*"

Struggling with the satchel the boys dragged and battered it up the stairs and into the *convento*. A wide corridor ran along one half the interior. The other half was made up of rooms, into one of which the boys lugged the satchel. "This is the one," they sang out.

"My room?" he inquired.

"Yes, Faddaire."

He saw a wide, high-ceilinged room, shutters that slid in wooden grooves for windows, an iron bedframe and a rattan spring, an iron stand for a washbasin, a table encrusted with candle drippings, a wobbly old chair. Must and mold everywhere.

"Jeremias, I am hungry."

"I will get. My mother is cooking."

Jeremias soon returned with a basket atop his head. "Here is the food, Faddaire," he announced. Putting the basket on the floor the boy began to set the dirty table, meanwhile telling Edward that his name was now "Mias."

The priest took some *guavas* he had purchased en route and counted out four of them. "For you, Mias."

"Oh, *singv:ilas!*" the boy exclaimed. His face puckered up in a wrinkle and his eyes shut tight with the anticipated pleasure of the first bite.

"You like *guavas* very much?" Edward asked.

"Oh, yes, Faddaire. Very dear, this *guava*," he hastened to explain. "Two for one centavo."

The priest nodded gravely. "What was that meat I had for supper?"

"That is *cabili* (wild pig)," the boy said.

"I thought so," agreed the priest, saying nothing of the unpleasant swampy flavor.

Having brought a mat and a mosquito net, the boys kissed his hand and bade him good night. Moths, mosquitoes, and an occasional huge coconut beetle zigzagged about the room. Outside the house the tropical blackness was heavy and still. Edward opened his breviary and began to say his Office. When he had finished, the loneliness of the room struck him like a blow. It seemed so empty, so long untenanted. He was chilled at the mere thought that this was to be his home for years to come. He left the room and went down to the little chapel.

Here, too, the feeling of emptiness pursued him. The chapel felt like a tomb, bleak and comfortless. He knelt and composed his thoughts for prayer, lifting his eyes to the tabernacle. A shock ran through him when he saw there was no sanctuary lamp. Then he remembered having been told that, for years past, there had been no resident missionary at Calapan and that the Blessed Sacrament was not reserved there. In fact, he recalled that it was years since Mass had been celebrated in Mangan.

Back in the rectory, he stood at the open window and looked out into the darkness. He was very lonely.

Chapter 26

EDWARD set up a small alcohol stove, filling the stove's fuel tank from a can of alcohol. Soon a pot of water was bubbling on the burner. Mias was everywhere, questioning with his eyes each movement of the priest. When the priest took a candle, lit it, and bent over the punctured alcohol can, the boy asked a question.

"What will you do now, Faddaire?"

"Eh?" said Edward, sealing the aperture in the can by dropping wax over it. "What did you say?"

"What is the *candela* —"

Woomps! a volcanic explosion shook the house, throwing Edward to the floor. Mias, flames in his hair, ran howling out of the room. Snatching up a pair of pants the priest pursued him to the veranda and smothered his flaming head.

Immediately the plaza filled with people. Somebody organized a group of natives to slosh water over the floor of the blazing kitchen. A buxom female suddenly burst into the rectory and folded Mias to her breast. "'Sus, María, José," she wailed. "Niño. Mias." She gazed at his badly singed locks.

"Doña Rosales," a broad-faced old man said, "Mias will make a fine diablo — he has hair of fire."

The company roared with laughter. Seeing that her boy was more scared than hurt, the mother joined in. Soon the crowd in the priest's room began to laugh and talk. Edward

produced a bundle of cigars. All the fire fighters and most of the women lighted up. It was the new priest's introduction to the people of his parish. The ensuing round-table discussion lasted two hours. The group finally dispersed, leaving only Mias and his mother. "Mias will go home now, Faddaire?" she questioned.

"Why, yes, Mrs. Rosales," the priest assented, "and believe me, I am very sorry that this should have happened."

"No; it is Mias' fault," she spoke up. "He tells me. Always talking, that boy." And she looked indignantly at her offspring.

"Here, Mias," said the priest, "let me have another look at you. I guess all the *pomada* on your hair helped keep your skin from burning," he commented. "It's just fried a bit, here and there. Run down to the *botica* and get some ointment for it. Here!" and he gave him some money.

"My mother will be the one to clean up," the boy said before he ducked out.

Edward turned to the boy's mother with a protest. "I almost kill Mias and now you want to—" But she was vigorously brooming the water and refuse through cracks in the floor.

He soon settled down to a steady round of work. Mias was hired as the houseboy at a wage of four pesos per month, plus board and lodging. By dint of much visiting of the *nipa* shacks the priest discovered that most of the people were Catholics, which meant that they had been baptized. He organized a catechism class, he grouped the young girls into the Hijas de Maria (Children of Mary), he gathered the married women into the Apostoladas, he formed a club for the boys. Constantly he wrote letters to the folks at home, and soon he had collected enough money to warrant a better building for the church. A neat chapel replaced the old hut. Hours of planning were followed by days of supervising. Each day was one of labor and heat, but disappointments

soon gave way to success. The village began to form solidly behind him. The new chapel, and its strident bells (one bell had previously functioned on a railroad locomotive) drew them yet more surely. He had to establish his home base before venturing into the hills for work among the pagans. Difficulties attended the work among the townspeople who were in some cases, to all intents and purposes, merely baptized pagans. He kept at them day in, day out. Thus the months of heat merged into the rainy season. Before he was aware of it a year had slipped by.

One day a rotund little man came to call on him. "I am Señor Pe Benito."

"Delighted to meet you," Edward rejoined affably, drawing up a chair for his guest. He had been so busy with his people, with organization work, and with building that he had not yet made the man's acquaintance.

"*Servidor de usted*" (Your servant), acknowledged the visitor. "I am the *Presidente*, Faddaire, and next week we have fiesta — San Antonio — the patron saint of the Municipio of Calapan — so we have San Antonio fiesta."

"Well, well, well," the priest exclaimed, "so soon already. I had almost let it slip my mind."

"Yes, Faddaire. We will have a mitin and arrange. There must be," he began on the small finger of his left hand and checked off the items, "a procession, a *Misa*, and a banquet."

"Of course, Señor Presidente," the priest agreed. "Let's have the meeting tonight. Please summon all the prominent people."

The president, gratefully accepting a cigar, began to chat. In the course of his talk he divulged the fact that he had not been to his religious duties for fifteen years. Edward arranged to hear his confession on the day before the fiesta.

The mail arrived that afternoon, bringing the news of Father Miguel's death. It seemed that the veteran missionary, in the throes of an acute attack of malaria, had ridden to Bañao for treatment. Ramon had ridden with him, helping

the sick man back into the saddle whenever he fell to the ground. On arrival at Bañao Father Miguel was delirious; he had been put to bed immediately and had been unconscious for several hours. When he came to, he was racked with pain. The doctor administered a hypodermic, and the good priest fell into a quiet sleep. Some hours later the nurse by his bedside noticed that he had ceased to breathe.

Edward had never suspected how much he was to suffer at this news. Sudden death in the missionary field was something he had learned to know, and he had heard of many a healthy missionary struck down in the midst of work. But Father Miguel had weathered so much hardship, had been able to shake off so readily the periodic attacks of fever, and had seemed so strong physically that Edward found it hard to believe that he was dead. Late that evening he felt the sharp pain of his own loss. Incident by incident he recalled Miguel's kindness and forbearance, especially in those weeks of the rainy season. But the memory of his own sufferings during that period of trial brought him up short. Had he not learned then what the missionary life meant for him? Had he not dedicated himself anew? Had he not promised that he would shirk no hardship, reject no sorrow, refuse no loneliness? Had he not renewed his pledge of loyalty to the Master?

He knelt before the open window and said a prayer for the repose of Father Miguel's soul. When it was finished he rose to his feet and spoke out into the darkness of the night. "Au revoir, old comrade. We shall meet again in the bosom of God."

Chapter 27

BEFORE dawn on the morning of the fiesta day Edward was aroused by a sound of gay music. "Mias!" he called. "Who is playing music?"

Rosalino and Mias appeared at the door of the priest's room.

"Th-a-a-at is the Diana."

"Diana?"

"Yes . . . to wake the people for fiesta."

"Oh — Lord love us, what a custom! Go to bed again." Edward rolled over on his mat as the band swung off the plaza on its way to another section of the town.

For several days hectic preparations had been in progress for the fiesta. Dunsinane Wood was on the march again. Men, carrying bundles of palm branches, went staggering around the plaza, erecting arches and decorating the church. There were prolonged meetings of committees. The Presidente strutted around and smoked cigars wherever any work was being done. Edward himself did all the work of organization and all the worrying. Finally the fiesta day was at hand.

Boom! — and the house quivered.

"Great Guns!" The priest jumped out of bed. "What was that?" He hurried to the window and peered out.

"*Bomberetas*, Faddaire!" yelled the two boys, hanging out of the adjoining window. Boom! went another explosion.

"This was not mentioned in the meetings," Edward reflected. "Seems to be something to be taken for granted." He turned back to his bed. At six o'clock the band from a neighboring village entered Calapan with brass blaring and drums thumping and took up its position before the Municipio.

The fiesta Mass was scheduled for eight o'clock. The sacristan had laid out the most solemn vestments. They were an old Gothic set, so liberally woven with gold thread as to look like a burnished shield. A native priest from Manila delivered the festive sermon; and for one solid hour he preached, rounding off his periods with an abundance of gestures. Meanwhile the congregation sat back and fanned itself, while dogs roamed about, questing a cool corner wherein to lie down, and altar boys in bare feet twitched and squirmed, and Edward suffered from the weight of the vestments. Then the choir broke into the Credo. The organ, borrowed for the occasion, always announced a fortissimo part by a clatter of the pedals as if the organist was getting up steam.

Finally the long ceremonies were over. In the sacristy Edward was relieving himself of the weight of the vestments. Suddenly the sacristan came running in from the church, shrieking as he came.

"Aguy! aguy! (alas, alas). Padre, the San Antonio is stolen."

"The statue of San Antonio? Stolen?"

"Oh, Padre Eduardo, what will we do for the procession?" the man wailed.

The procession is the high light of a religious fiesta. In fact, for the majority of the people it is the fiesta itself. Outside the church two brass bands were warming up, and flower-bedecked floats were wheeling into line. Within the church the large congregation was lighting the tapers. Edward turned to the wailing sacristan. "Ask the Señor Presidente to come here at once."

That functionary knew the name of the culprit at once. It was a man called Loco Pedro who lived in an adjoining village. Soon the Municipal police chief and his entire force of three constables were on their way to arrest the delinquent and to find the statue. In forty minutes they reported that Loco Pedro had disappeared and that they could not find the San Antonio. Meanwhile the brass bands gave selections in the plaza. In the church the congregation whispered impatiently and wondered at the delay.

The only suggestion the Presidente had was that he himself should announce the theft from the altar. But Edward had another idea.

"Genio," he said, addressing the sacristan. "Bring the statue of Santo Niño and also the San Vicente. You might also bring two white stoles." Edward fastened the two stoles like bandoliers over the shoulders of the San Vicente and then arranged the small statue of the Holy Child beneath them. The two stoles held the statue of the Infant in place upon San Vicente's breast. The priest pointed to his creation. "Genio, that is the San Antonio."

Gingerly the newly created San Antonio was hoisted on the waiting float. Four stalwarts from the plaza were appointed to carry it on their shoulders into the church. Its appearance in the sanctuary was greeted with deep silence, all eyes being focused on the saint of the fiesta. Eugenio hurried down the central aisle to clear the way. At the main door of the church his progress was barred by several stout doñas.

"Genio, is that the San Antonio?" one of them whispered.

"Bobo (fool), that is not the San Antonio," said another.

"Aba," the sacristan snorted, "hasn't he the Santo Niño in his arms? Of course, it is the San Antonio."

His reply gave them pause, but as the statue drew closer an old woman stepped up to the sacristan. In a loud tone of voice and with a hand pointed at the statue, she cried: "It is the San Vicente."

At this point the Presidente gave evidence of those talents that had won him his high office. "Doña Carmelita Casiana," he replied, "who gave you that sweet name you have?"

"The Padre."

"Who gave me, Señor Leoncia Pe Benito, my name?" he persisted.

"The Padre."

"So. It is the privilege, the honor, the duty of the *Cura Parocco* of the *Iglesia Romana, Catholica y Apostolica* to give us our names. So if Padre Eduardo gives the name San Antonio to the statue of San Vicente, then he is San Antonio."

The listeners signified their approval of this argument. The doñas moved aside, and the procession swung out into the plaza with both bands blaring the praises of the pseudo San Antonio.

Every street in the village was covered by the procession and all of them were dusty. The sun was painfully hot. It was midday when finally the parade returned to the church. Thirty baptisms were awaiting the priest. Even then he had no opportunity for rest. Señor Pe Benito immediately whirled him away to his house for a *banquette*. Dishes and delicacies that revolted his stomach were forced on him. He had to make a speech. This at once evoked a formal response from the Presidente. It was only "*dos palabras*" (two words) but it took the voluble official thirty minutes to say them. Edward then returned to the *convento*. He was in time to see two drunken men being stoned away from the veranda by his watchful houseboy.

"I'll have a bit of siesta now, Mias," the priest said, after calming down the excited boy.

"But there is the money, Faddaire. In the basket."

"Oh, the collection. Well, let's have it."

The priest counted it out: two pesos and twenty centavos. Ten pesos was the honorarium for the preacher, eight pesos and fifty centavos for refreshments; the fiesta was going to

leave him in the red. He removed his cassock, towed away the perspiration, kicked off his shoes and stretched out on his bed.

"Apooool!"

"Mias! See who it is."

"Funeral, Padre," came the response. "He is dead this very early morning. He must be bury now."

Edward donned a fresh cassock and went to the church. In the tropics the law requires interment within twenty-four hours after death. The funeral services were a sharp contrast to the festivities of the morning.

Back in the *convento* he found a group of delegations awaiting him. People were squatting and standing on the veranda and leaning all over the steps. Mias told him they were the head people from the various villages that belonged to the town of Calapan. Following immemorial custom they had come to the town to bring their *cura Parocco* a gift for the fiesta.

Then it began. Gifts, introductions, requests for him to visit their own little village, petitions for him to say Mass in their village some Sunday, names, roads, distances. Realizing that such an opportunity for contacting these remote members of his flock would seldom occur again within the year, Edward jotted down notes. He would let them know when he could get to the villages, when he could provide a catechist, whether he could erect a tiny chapel. Rice, eggs, chickens, clusters of fresh coconuts, *guavas*, *papayas* — a heap of gifts they had brought for him. Then at Mias' suggestion he dispensed holy pictures and medals to all. To one or other more prominent member of the delegations he gave a rosary. Cigars and refreshments were dispensed. When the last of them had kissed his hand in farewell, it was long past suppertime.

Mias then told him that his mother expected him to have "suffer" in her house. He was so tired that to dine out was the last thing he desired. Realizing the honor it meant to the

boy's family and the preparations made for the event, he consented. Loading up Mias with choice portions of rice and fruit from his gifts he accompanied the boy to his home.

Later that night as the priest was preparing for bed a tap came at his door. "Yes?" he replied.

"Faddaire! There is the parade now. Look."

Throwing on his bathrobe and slipping into his chinelas Edward watched the gaudy parade with the "Village Queen" ensconced on a huge float of colored papers and lights.

"Berry beautiful!"

"Very — " the weary priest agreed.

"Faddaire, they hab found San Antonio. But he is destroyed. And Pedro the Loco, he found also. He hab died."

"What happened to the poor fellow? A fit?"

"No, Faddaire," the boy wagged his head in emphatic negation. "It is *castigo de Dios*" (punishment of God).

The morning after the fiesta found Edward tired and listless. His meditation and Mass finished, he sat down to breakfast: an egg, coffee, some bananas. Breviary in hand he went out to the veranda and sat gratefully in a chair. "Apo!" came a greeting from the stairs.

"*Naimbag nga bigatmo*" (Good morning) he returned perfunctorily.

It was a baptism. A large group of people entered the *convento*.

"The name of the child?" he asked as he sat at his desk and drew out a baptismal blank.

"Catalina."

"Godfather?"

"These — "

"These? Let me see. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve — You want twelve godfathers?"

"Yes, Apo. If there are twelve godfathers then it is sure the twelve Apostles will watch over the *niña*" (child).

He set down the name of one. It was a solemn baptism and took a great deal of time. At the *convento* he found Mias awaiting him with a slip of a boy at his side. "Faddaire, this one is wounded," announced Mias, "on the fingers of his foot."

Between the toes of the boy's right foot the priest found a festering gash. With his first-aid kit he cleaned and dressed the wound.

"This one is my friend," Mias said, apropos of nothing. "My friend from Escalante. Near the lefers."

"Lepers?" The priest paused in his work. "Are there lepers up there?"

"Yes, Faddaire. Six houses of them. Sometime the Sanitary Inspector gib them medicines."

The priest finished dressing the boy's foot. "Tell the lepers that I will come to visit them, eh?" he said patting him on the shoulder. "Mias, give him something to eat before he goes."

The priest picked up his breviary and began his interrupted prayers anew. "Apo!" He set the book down. "Yes?" A young man ascended the stairs. He looked vaguely about him and fingered his large-brimmed straw hat.

"What can I do for you?"

The young man's gaze came to rest on the priest. He looked at him long and silently. "Faddaire. . . . I will be married."

"Well, well, that's fine. Come, sit down." Edward drew up a chair for him and the youth sat down very gingerly. "What is your name?"

"Venancio Vasquez, from Calapan."

"When do you intend to be married?"

"Faddaire, right now."

"Hm — but — but we don't do things that way, you know. We must have the *proclamas* (banns) and then —"

But the young man, as is almost general Filipino custom in the provinces, wished to be married "right now." By

arguing for nearly an hour, the priest persuaded the youth to postpone the date for at least a week.

Later in the forenoon as the priest was entering the church, his houseboy accosted him.

"Faddaire, there is an old man in there, Lacay Pablo. He is not taken confession berry, berry many years. My mother tells me."

"Indeed. Well, run along."

The priest entered the church and knelt in one of the rear benches, dropping his head wearily in his hands. Physically and mentally he was tired. As his mind cleared he tried to take stock of his ordinary everyday life. So many trivial things to be done, so many helpless or stupid people to see, so much disregard of order and plan! Could he ever teach his flock to learn that there must be special times for baptisms, for confessions, for business calls on the priest? Could he ever get them to understand the value of time? He realized their dependence on him as keenly as he saw his duty toward them. But surely he should have some little time each day to himself? The missionary life, so full of external activities, could be endured by the ordinary man only if the inner spiritual life were carefully nurtured. Yet he had no time to take care of his own spiritual growth, no free time for meditation, scarcely time to say his daily Office. He would not grudge all this disturbance if it were really necessary. The trouble was that it was not necessary except in the rarest cases. Would he ever be sure of a whole hour to himself?

Then the thought came to him that there must be faults on both sides. He did not understand his people, nor did they understand him. The people and the pastor were different not only in race and color but even in ways of thought. He had been among them long enough to know they were far from stupid. They certainly saw a thing clearly, when they wanted to. But in ordinary things their processes of thought seemed to run in jagged curves, rather than in

straight lines. How often he had to curb his impatience when trying to explain something? For example, in the case of the young man who had expected to be married without benefit of banns or other preparations on the part of the priest? How often had he been called out on sick calls late at night, only to find nothing prepared for his coming and sometimes even to find that the allegedly sick person had really no need for the priest at all at such an inconvenient hour. Yet they were his people. They were his job — of body and soul. He must try to understand them if he were to serve them at all.

Then the thought came to him that of himself he could never understand them. "Of myself I can do nothing." He set himself to pray that the Sacred Heart might give him strength, might help him to understand. After all, it was Jesus he served, and he begged his Divine Master to help him to remember that what he did unto the least of these little ones he did unto Him. The sharp sound of a violent fit of coughing interrupted him. On the other side of the church, far up near the altar, he saw an old man, the mahogany jaws sunken, the stiff white hair standing up like a thatch on the man's head, and the rheumy eyes staring vacantly at the tabernacle. He rose and went up to the old man.

"Lacay Ramon?"

"Apo?"

"Why do you come to the church?" he asked gently, as he sat down beside him.

"Santo Cristo," the old man mumbled, pointing a finger at the crucifix above the altar.

"You love the Santo Cristo?"

"*Oen, Apo*" (Yes, Father).

"Well then, why not tell Him you are sorry for your sins. You will show Him that you love Him. You will go to confession. There is no one in the church. You need not be ashamed."

"*Saan, Apo*" (No, Father).

"Come, use this chance, Pablo. Confess your sins and be reconciled to God."

"*Saan, Apo.*"

"But why not, Pablo?"

The old fellow chewed on his gums and then turned his rheumy eyes on the priest. "Apo, I really cannot confess. I have no sins," he said simply and earnestly.

The priest blinked. Rather dazedly, he rose and left the church.

An hour later Mias, glancing into Father's room, saw the priest bent over a book. It was a volume of moral theology.

Chapter 28

EDWARD and Mias had ridden through the mountains for three hours. It was already dark when they reached the cluster of huts where the dying person was. Mias led the priest to a hut where a lone light was showing. Everything was in order: lighted candles were on a table, a small corporal had been spread, and another priest stood at the side of the sick woman. The strange priest turned at their entrance. He was small, with close-cropped, grizzled hair and eyes of dark blue. "A Catholic priest?" he asked Edward.

"Yes. Father Courtney from Calapan."

"Father Edward Courtney?" the other exclaimed, his expression of wonderment changing to pleasure. "Well, well, well! I am Father Nicholas." They shook hands.

"Delighted to meet you, Father," Edward said. "Why did these people call me?"

"That's a mystery to me," the other declared. "This place is really in my territory. Your section is quite a ways over to the west. Let's see." He turned to the owner of the house and began to question him in the dialect. Yes, he had called Father Courtney. Yes, he had called Father Nicholas. Why did he call both? The woman was very sick and he didn't know if he could get a priest, so to be sure he called two! Father Nicholas began the anointing. As he bent over the sick woman she emitted a half-gasp, half-sneezing breath. An old woman seized the priest's arm. "Padre, do no give the anointing," she implored, "she will die."

"Why?"

"Did you not see? She sneezed. If she is anointed after the sneeze she will surely die."

"Out of the way," the little priest snorted, shaking off her hand. "Sneeze or no sneeze, she gets anointed."

Dawn was breaking when the two priests finally left the hut. Father Nicholas had persuaded Edward to accompany him to his station of Palir. Father Nicholas set a crazy pace that brought stabs of pain into Edward's side. At long last they topped a hill and saw Palir below them, nestling in a bowl of green-clad hills. Full morning was on them as they jounced down into the village and entered the *convento*. After Mass Edward found a *mañana* chair. Sprawled out comfortably, he had opportunity to take stock of his host. The *parocco* of Palir was small, square-headed, shrewd, quick in his movements, efficient, very Scotch.

"You run a school way up here in the mountains, Father?" he inquired, remembering the groups of barefooted children he had seen in the village with books under their arms.

Father Nicolas sat down opposite him. "Yes, I do; practically on my own resources. The congregation gives me three hundred pesos a year as a subsidy, but I do the rest. I own horses, pigs, four carabaos, two oxen. I have some land and coconut trees which the people take care of for me. I get half the produce."

"How do you keep the accounts?"

"Oh, the people make two equal piles of all produce. I can choose the one I want."

Edward's gaze drifted around the room. "What is all that stuff over there?" he asked gesturing toward a table heaped with bags, pins, and paraphernalia.

"That? — oh, my butterflies."

"Butterflies? That's a rather scientific hobby isn't it?"

"Not for me. I mount them and sell them. It brings in a few pesos. Also beetles. I've got boxes of larvae all over the place."

"When do you get the time to hunt them?"

"You think I hunt them with a net?"

"Why, isn't that the usual way?"

"Not for me. The children catch them for me. They also bring in the larvae and I develop them here in a glass box."

Just then a child timidly looked in at the door. "*Carmelitos?*" The priest doled out six pieces of candy from a tin box, receiving one centavo in payment. He smiled at Edward's amazed face. "The *carmelitos* cost me one centavo for three pieces. A wonderful way to draw the children."

Edward fell into a spell of musing. Peddling candy, stuffing beetles, framing butterflies! Was there anything these missionaries would not do in order to keep the pot aboiling? Father Nicholas was speaking.

"What club," he said, leaning forward animatedly, "will win the pennant in the American League this year, Father?"

"Pennant? You mean baseball? Oh! Well . . . I . . . to tell you the truth, Father, I haven't kept abreast of that." Father Nicholas' expectant face fell. "Of course," his visitor hastened to explain, "I hear from home regularly, but I am always asking for things I need. Baseball is a bit forgotten."

"Didn't you ever play the game?"

"Oh yes, I've played it a great deal."

A look of admiration crept over Father Nicholas' features. "I've never had a game. I am Australian born, you know, and my parents are out of Glasgow. I think the game of baseball is great." Forthwith he launched forth into an analysis of major-league batters and their averages, he talked about the outstanding pitchers of the previous year, and he discussed chances of this or that particular club in the league.

"But you said you never saw a game," Edward remarked.

"I get the *Baseball Magazine*," was the triumphant retort. "A friend o' mine, an Aussie in the States, sends it to me." He pointed to a corner where two shelves were filled with copies of the *Baseball Magazine* for the past few years. "Do you want to read some?" he asked cordially.

"Well, not just now," Edward protested. "To tell you the truth, Father, at present I don't need food for the mind but food for —"

"Oh me, O my! I did forget. 'Tis the inner man that needs replenishing. When I get going on baseball there never is an end. 'Tis once every two months or so that I get to Kambulu on the other side of this range and much nearer than Calapan. A man needs a hobby or else — well, there'll be things to eat in a twinkling." He hastened out of the room. Soon the two priests sat down to heaping plates of boiled rice, bananas, *papayas*, a tin of cheese in honor of the guest.

"Faddaire," Mias said, on the homeward trail. "The lefers is not very distance from here."

The priest reined in his horse. "You don't say? How far is it?"

By the use of a number of twigs Mias made a rough map on the ground and explained that at one point the trail forked. There was a footpath above it, he said, and there were "good sceneries." Edward at once decided to take the side trip even though it entailed an extra two hours of travel. Mias should go on ahead with the horses and gather as many of the lepers together as he could, while he, himself, would take the footpath. They parted at the intersection.

The priest cut himself a stick and began to hike. The ride of the previous night had been too strenuous for a first dose and he was both saddle-galled and stiff. It would probably be months before his smashed body was so hardened to the saddle that he could ride in comfort. But walking was easy enough on the downward trail. He walked steadily, his stick aiding the leg with the limp. Bright-colored birds flew across his path, but never a song did they utter. "The land where flowers have no perfume and birds do not sing," he quoted. "Well, that's not entirely true," he mused aloud, "The ilan-ilan has a heavy perfume." It was late afternoon and his helmet felt heavy. He glanced at his wrist watch. Past four; he should be there soon.

The high grass was confusing, but the track led right through it. Probably just a level terrace of it. The track petered out, but he was certain he could soon pick it up again as he kept the sun on his left. But this grass grew to the height of six feet and more. He couldn't see over it any more. He realized he was lost.

He retraced his steps. After fifteen minutes of walking, the high green wall was still about him. No break appeared in that mass of green blades. An hour later he was still in the maze. The light was beginning to disappear. For a moment he lost his head and shouted, again and again. No reply came. He walked — and walked — and walked. A wan moon came up. He was thirsty. . . .

Hours later the fierce red dawn flung its flames of light over the vast stretch of cogon grass. The beams of the rising sun fell on the weary figure of the priest. His thirst became acute. He chewed the coarse grass but found no relief. He knelt and prayed. He fell and lay prone. The tortures of thirst awoke him, only to find that another sun had set. Again the plodding, stumbling march — water — water — anything for water. The answer to his thirst was a red dawn with knives of light . . . midmorning and the crazed priest babbled as he stumbled and saw it — water — water — at last — deliriously he crawled forward on the flat of his stomach until he plunged his face into the coolness. . . .

Two days after his disappearance Mias and several lepers found him. He was lying prone at the edge of a carabao wallow, his face in the watery mud.

Chapter 29

EDWARD awoke at the sound of footsteps.

"Mias," the priest muttered, "you?" He looked vaguely about him. "Am I sick?"

"Yes, Faddaire," the boy informed him. "Dysentaria. You drink bad water, Faddaire."

"Bad water? water — water."

"In the cogon."

"Cogon? —" He didn't remember. He closed his eyes again.

When Edward next awoke he saw a familiar fat face bending over him. "How are you, Edward?" came a hoarse whisper.

"Am I dreaming — in Manila — or is it Father Mulligan?"

"Mulligan of the Mulligans — in the flesh, and very much so," came the jovial reply as he patted his paunch. "It's taken you a long time to recognize these features of mine, laddy boy."

"What's happened?"

"You've been a sick lad, a very sick one, with one foot inside the pearly gates. And it all comes of trying to go off and live like a carabao."

"Why? What do you mean?" was the puzzled reply.

"You got lost in a big tract of cogon grass and went water-mad, I guess. They found you in a carabao wallow. You got everything but Bright's disease. Boil your drinking water,

boil it. Didn't Fred Harrison tell you that?" he added whimsically.

"I feel as weak as a kitten."

"We heard the news in Manila and I needed a holiday. I got your Provincial's consent for me to do your work. I brought a medico and a boy to nurse you through."

"What was the matter with Sister Regina? Wouldn't she come?"

Father Mulligan snorted. "After that dig I know you're getting better. You swallow this." He handed him a spoonful of brown-looking liquid. "It's — it's — well the doctor calls it medicine. Seems to me to be three parts *nux vomica* and one part *asafetida* with a dash of hair tonic. But he says it will do you good. It didn't do me any good, but I thought I wouldn't tell you that until you had taken it. How did it taste?"

Edward grimaced. "Like horse-radish."

"Uh-huh," grunted Father Mulligan in assent. "There's something of that in it too. Now go to sleep like a good fellow or I'll send a wire for Sister Regina to come."

The invalid dropped off to sleep. Father Mulligan looked about at the bare walls, the uneven floor boards, the bareness, the simplicity of the unpainted room, the paucity of furniture. "What a dump!" he exclaimed. "Well, everyone to his taste, as the lady said when she kissed the cow." Shrugging his chunky shoulders he went off in search of Mias.

A week later the invalid was allowed the pleasure of an hour on the veranda. It was a star-swept tropical evening. The palms were bending against the dusky sky. Below the veranda the natives were talking their soft vowel-choked language. Off in the distance someone was playing a guitar. Edward breathed deeply.

Father Mulligan from the depths of his *mañana* chair gave his usual grunt of satisfaction. He fumbled for a cigarette. "Dysentery, a touch of the sun, and a persistent fever. The doctor thinks it might have been typhoid."

"Mulligan, old top," Edward said, "if you hadn't come with the doctor and the nurse I'd probably be pushing up the daisies now."

Father Mulligan drew on his cigarette. "Hard to kill an Irishman," he smiled.

"I appreciate your giving up your work to come down and take over for me."

"Oh forget it, Ed," was the rejoinder. "My day in that seminary is divided into little sections by bells. I eat and study and sleep and think — by bells. I feel like a fire horse all the time. So I don't mind a change. And anyhow," he added with a malicious tone of satisfaction, "Fred Harrison has to take over my classes for me."

Mias appeared on the veranda. The boy turned to Father Mulligan. "Faddaire, I spend the ten centavos you gib me."

"What for?" grunted Father Mulligan noncommittally.

"*Quahkeroach*."

"What reptile may that be?"

"It is a food, Faddaire."

"Glory be! You don't mean we eat cockroaches?"

"He means 'Quaker Oats,'" Edward explained with a chuckle. "Mias will accompany me to Manila when I go for retreat."

"What for? To see how the Manila Quahker-roaches are?"

"No. He's going to make a pilgrimage to Antipolo" (National Shrine in honor of Our Lady).

"Well, you don't say?" ejaculated Father Mulligan. "And where will you sleep?" he asked of the boy.

"Even there, Faddaire."

"Well, are you going to sleep under the bus?"

"No, Faddaire. The people there come and ask."

"Uh-huh. Only ask — how much?"

"You, you must only pay them to the candles."

"For the candles, Mias," Edward corrected, "for the candles."

"For the candles, Faddaire."

"And where are you going to eat?"

"There. I will buy."

"But you haven't told Father Mulligan why you are going to Antipolo," Edward said.

"That is my promise, two years."

"And what did you make the promise for?"

"If I get the money."

"Money? What for?"

"To go."

"Go where?"

"To Antipolo."

"Holy St. Patrick!" Father Mulligan scratched his head. "This beats Banagher! Here, Socrates, let's get this right. You promised our Blessed Mother that if you got the money you would visit her shrine at Antipolo. That was two years ago. Is that the history of your pilgrimage?"

"Yes, Faddaire," with a happy smile and nod. Seeing no further questions forthcoming he slipped quietly inside the house.

"That boy of yours has compound microscopic eyes," the stout priest said. "He can see behind and in front of him and he can see the minutest things. Your socks, your shoelaces, your eyes, hair, everything is scrutinized, weighed in the balance, and compared with his idea of the fitness of things."

"He certainly is able to tell me a lot of things about myself I never knew before," Edward agreed.

"And I can tell you some things about that boy that you never knew before," Father Mulligan declared with ominous heaviness. "When you were frying with fever I had some wonderful days with Mias before he understood my English and vice versa. It almost cost me my life," he said somberly.

"What happened?"

"My fountain pen got out of order. I gave it to him with instructions to boil a pot of water and then to place the pen

in the water and let it soak. The rubber sac was ink encrusted, you see. At supper that night I asked Mias what had happened to the coffee. Nothing. He had only done what I ordered. Boiled my pen in a pot of water for a half-hour! He used the water for making coffee since it was still warm!" The invalid's laughter interrupted him. "For two days," went on Father Mulligan, "my teeth looked as though I was on a blackberry diet."

The stout priest lit another one of his interminable cigarettes.

"You know, in that letter of Father Superior telling me to come to Manila for retreat," Edward said, "he hinted at an appointment to a chaplaincy in the city."

"Why don't you take it? It's easier than this."

Edward was silent for a while. "I want this," he finally replied.

Father Mulligan flicked the ash from his cigarette on the veranda floor. "Then, Edward, stay at your job and I say God bless you."

"Thank you, Mulligan." A silence fell between them. "You know this topic came up between me and Fred Harrison when I was in the hospital in Manila," he confided. "He urged me strongly to give up this work. He thought I wasn't doing the right thing. Sort of wasting my abilities on work not cut out for me."

Father Mulligan shot his cigarette over the railing. "Look here, Ed, I am not a literary light; just fat, forty, and favored by God to be a priest. I have seen a few things and I say — stick to what your heart tells you to do. This little world of ours is filled with men who wouldn't know an ideal if it stuck a thumb in their eye. The breath of our nostrils, yours and mine, is sacrifice. It can't be anything else when the crucifix is the keystone of our faith. Fellows like me talk about it and follow — from afar. We need more priests and people that are literal-minded, who go the whole way. Can't I orate?" he broke off suddenly. "Come on, get to bed before

one of these mosquitoes backs into you and unloads a cargo of malaria in your venous system."

Back in his room Father Mulligan was preparing for bed. Seated in a chair, he was grunting and groaning in the painful process of taking off his shoes. The first shoe came off after a particularly strenuous effort. "Jerusalem, my happy home!" he ejaculated. "Thank God, that's done." In attacking the problem of the other shoe he began to talk to himself. "Great boy, that Courtney lad." A long and painful grunt followed. "Swell priest he is. Wish there were more like him." Another grunt, and then a heave, to be followed by a sigh of contentment as the shoe came off. "Knows he'll die in some dump like this but won't give it up." An attack on the socks was made. When the two socks were off, the priest looked at the crucifix. "Well, the Saviour wouldn't come down from the Cross when He could have. Gee! I wish I could be like Ed Courtney. What a whale of a priest that boy is!"

He got down on his knees, slumped back on his heels, heaved a sigh, and began to say his prayers.

Chapter 30

A MONTH in Manila restored Edward in great part to his former strength. On returning to Calapan, he arranged to say his first Mass on Christmas Day at the leper colony. With the aid of Mias he carefully prepared two generous saddle bags with medicine, clothing, some cigars, candies, matches. Early on the day before Christmas they set out on their horses for the leper village.

As Edward left the *convento* he observed the Chief of Police leaning over his newly constructed fence and eyeing his pineapple plants. The priest noticed that four of them were ripe for plucking.

"Very fine *piñas*, Padre," the Chief of Police remarked.

"Yes," the priest agreed. "I am going to eat them for Christmas. Keep your eye open that none of those pillots get in here and steal them while I am away on my trip, eh?"

"Of course, Padre," was the courteous rejoinder. "Why not."

"Feels good to be on a horse again, eh, Mias?" Edward shouted as they galloped along.

"Yes, Faddaire."

"Think I will get lost in the cogon again?"

"No, Faddaire," stated Mias emphatically. "This one knows," and he indicated the glum-visaged native that rode before them as guide.

They rode in silence until they came to the memorable

cogon stretch. Mias pointed out where they had found the priest. Standing up in his saddle Father Courtney looked out over the vast swaying tops of the grass and began to understand why he had gone astray.

On the side of the mountain they saw a terraced cluster of huts. The guide gestured toward them and stopped. "This is the place, Faddaire," announced Mias. "This one (the guide) will stay here. He does not like."

"Afraid of infection, eh?" the priest asked. The man did not reply.

Mias and the priest rode on and up into the terraced village. The people had assembled in the largest hut. The Apo Padi was going to speak to them to tell them something good.

With pity in his heart, Edward gazed at the handful of outcasts. One had a bloated face in which the eyes could hardly be seen; an elderly man had stumps for hands; two small girls were vile with sores; an old woman with straight, thin, ill-kept white hair had a ghastly bulb of red flesh protruding from the eye socket. The odor of the group was nauseating. The young priest talked to them about sin, about original sin and how we all have it at birth; if we do not get baptized and get rid of it we die with sin. He showed them vivid pictures of heaven's joys and hell's tortures. His picture of hell was a particularly lurid print. "That," he assured them, "is hell and that is where you go if you die without baptism."

The listeners signified their willingness for instruction so that they could be baptized. On the outskirts of the group an elderly woman with dark skin and sunken cheeks stood apart.

"Well, old mother," he called out to her, "aren't you going to be baptized?"

"No, Apo Padi, I guess not," she said in the hoarse voice of the leper. "My father, my mother, and all my relatives died without baptism. . . ."

"And so?" prompted the priest.

"I want to go to hell, so I can be with my relatives," she finished.

The priest shifted his approach. Finally he managed to elicit the needful sentiments for a baptism of desire; there for the present he had to leave that determined soul. Then he distributed the gifts he had brought with him, and followed this up by a brief explanation of the Mass which he would celebrate for them the next morning.

With the afternoon still before him, he saddled up and set out for a visit to a settlement of pagan hillmen an hour's ride distant. Toal was the name of the place. His first view of the terraces recalled his work in the Tipucan country. The natives, known as Kilangas, were like the Tipucans in dress and housing. At first they were shy and distant, but gradually they managed to get together a group when they heard an *Americano* had come to visit them. For some minutes he regaled them with an account of the wonders of the United States and finally worked his way around to religion and the idea of the Great Being, the Creator of all, God. He spoke fervently upon the idea of God, His Fatherhood, His Providence. When he concluded his discourse the *Capitán* arose and made a curt reply. "You think we have no God? We have God. The best thing is — you go home to your God and leave us to our own."

Tired and discouraged Edward rode back to his lepers. After a meager supper from the provisions in his saddle bags, he stretched out to sleep on the floor of the leper's hut. But slumber would not come. His mind was filled with the problems of these pagans. He thought of plans to win them.

Mias' voice calling for him brought him to his feet. He rushed out of the house to find the boy cowering on the ground, blood streaming from a gash in his head. Over him stood the guide who had refused to enter the village, a club in his hand. With a leap the priest cleared the intervening space and backheeled the attacker with a suddenness that

knocked the breath out of him. "Mias, a rope," he called. The boy dragged a rope free from the saddle gear. The priest trussed up the recumbent figure and tied him to a tree. "Now, stay out here until you are sober," said the priest.

The man looked at him with murder in his drink-sodden eyes. "I promise to kill you, priest," he snapped viciously.

"He is loco, that one," said Mias terrified. "The *tuba* make him loco. We go home now, Faddaire," he pleaded. "He will *bolo* you tomorrow."

"We will see about that tomorrow," said Edward. "Come up into the house," he ordered. Once inside he proceeded to bandage the boy's head. "You got a Christmas gift already, Mias. Quite an egg," he commented as he worked on the swollen gash!

"Berry painful, Faddaire."

Edward had the boy take his sleeping place on the floor and bade him take his rest. He himself went to the door and sat down. The hut was a deserted one, above the leper settlement. He sat there a long time. The figure of the drunken attacker was quiet. Evidently the *tuba* was taking effect. The man had probably brought a bottle of the stuff with him. Well, he'd see about that in the morning.

Sitting in the doorway of the bamboo hut he looked down the hillside to the leper colony. Lights were still burning in some of the huts, but away and beyond the terrace was the darkness of the night. He knew that out in that darkness were the hills, but he could not see them. Neither could he see the valley at their base, nor the river that ran through the wilderness.

It was peaceful, but it was also lonely. Inevitably he recalled that it was Christmas Eve and he began to think of home. What a lonely Christmas he was facing! In the main station of the mission of Lagan, far away in Bañao, the priests would be happy with the bustle of confessions and with all the preparations for the Midnight Mass. Yet here he was, separated from the nearest white man by four hours

of broken trails, and his only resting place an abandoned hut so filthy and decayed that even the lepers had left it to its fate.

He thought of New York, with the soft snow settling on the hats and coats of the shoppers. At this hour its streets would be a joyful bedlam, with the wild honkings of horns and the happy roar of the traffic. He pictured the busy stores, the swinging doors of the restaurants, the glory of the florists' shops, the crowded subways and the passengers laden with their parcels covered in brilliant tinsel paper wrappings. In fancy he stood at the portals of St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue; he looked at the stately arches of the great church and at the high altar ablaze with its hundreds of lights; and he heard in his heart the great choir as it broke forth into the soul-shaking strains of the *Adeste Fideles*.

He began to think of many a Christmas Eve and his home. Far back in the years there used to be the excitement of waiting for Santa Claus, the preparation of the stockings to hang in the corner of the unused fireplace, the always futile effort to keep awake. Later, there had been the last-minute preparations for the family's attendance at the Midnight Mass: the soutane and surplice to be folded carefully by his mother, the shoes to be rigidly inspected, the unruly head of hair to be brushed into place. And then there was the long joy of Christmas Day, with its great family reunion and his mother, her face radiant, presiding over it all.

Does a man ever forget his mother, he wondered. Here in this abysmal darkness she seemed to be with him, close to him and even talking to him. Closer is she than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet. He remembered that the Saviour's mother had stood at the foot of the cross. And then his thought took flight and through his mind thronged pictures of the various stages of his Master's bitter passion. It was already dawn when he rose to his feet. He went over to look at his captive. The man was standing upright, having worked free from his bonds.

"Good morning," the priest said. "Do you want to kill me?"

"Faddaire, I am very ashamed," said the man as he hung his head.

The priest put his hand on his shoulder. "It is forgotten. Bring the horses around to the end of the terrace. We leave right after Mass."

"Yes, Faddaire."

The priest turned back to the hut. "Faddaire?" It was the guide addressing him.

"Yes?" said the priest, halting.

"I will come to the Mass."

"But I thought you did not like to be near the lepers."

"I do not like, Faddaire, but I will do penance."

"Oh, that's fine. Hurry along now and God bless you."

By dint of hard riding the priest and Mias arrived before the *convento* of Calapan at nine o'clock of the same morning. Edward was still fasting, for there were yet two Masses to say. Rosalino greeted him. "Faddaire, some one hab stole *piñas*" (pineapples).

The priest looked at his patch of *piñas*. "Were any boys around?" he asked.

There was a lengthy pause broken by Mias. "Th-a-at Chees of Po'leese."

Edward laughed heartily. "I guess you are right, Mias, but we won't call him names. I guess I'll be losing you soon. That head of yours has taken an awful beating since you enlisted in my service — first I almost blew it off, now it's almost beaten off."

The boy smiled. "I hab hard head, Faddaire."

"You bet," agreed the priest, "and a brave heart."

"Thank you only," the boy said simply.

"That's a new one," grinned the priest. "Come on, let's get ready for Mass."

Chapter 31

IN THE dim light of an oil lamp Edward Courtney was writing a letter. It must be written before he got to bed. When it was ready for the envelope he read it over. This is what met his eyes:

Dear Fred:

Your note about your recall to the States was put into my hand as I was mounting horse for the mountains. My neighbor, Father Nicholas, is down with the gastric flu and I have come over the four-hour trail to pinch hit. I am glad that the authorities have taken cognizance of your great work here, but I know that I shall feel like an orphan whenever I ride into Manila.

I am writing this in the *convento* at Palir. I rode the last half of the journey in a blinding rain, and the chill seems to have gotten into my bones. It is pitch dark but I can hear the medley of slashing, swishing noises from the river. The village is asleep, but some flying foxes are making the night hideous from a large mango tree near by.

You mention nothing about your return, so I presume that the home job is a permanent one. For your sake I am glad of that. You will be a big success, Fred, at administrative work, but probably you'll never see this corner of the vineyard again. When we last met in Manila during my retreat, I had the feeling that we were talking together for the last time. The runner will pick this up in the morning and it will reach you before you sail. God be with you in your journey and may our Blessed Mother keep all harm from your path. Keep me in your prayers, as I do you in mine.

God bless you always,

Edward.

The months that followed at Calapan merged into years of intense toil, hard journeyings, uphill struggles against the hostility of pagans and their ingrained superstitions. There seemed to be no end to the disappointments from faithless catechists, from the people's indifference and lethargy, from the lack of funds needed for the work. The days and weeks and months were a treadmill of worries, catechumen classes, baptisms, sick calls, and funerals. In spare moments Edward was ever composing letters for help. The difficulties from the language and the food had dwindled away into insignificance. They were nothing in comparison with the effort to keep up the demands of the daily work and to combat the lassitude that was on him every morning and the feeling of impotence to achieve that settled over him every evening. And yet Edward Courtney was a successful missionary; perhaps his greatest success being that he failed to see how the charm of his person and the readiness of his self-sacrificing devotion were influencing the natives.

The poet says that "the world is Vagabondia to him who is a vagabond." To him who is a lover all the world is love-land. Edward could see beautiful and lovable things in his people: the naïve thought and speech of the children, the true and ever ready hospitality of their elders, the simple trust which all placed in him. He learned the depth of their family ties, the tenderness of their mother love, the bright unhampered joyousness of their youth along the bamboo-shaded hillsides. He, too, was a lover. So he read its language and found its subtle power at work in all things about him and perused its lessons most deeply and truly, for His love was Love Incarnate.

There came a Saturday when Father Nicholas rode into Calapan. The next day was to be a solemn First Holy Communion Day for his mountain-hid town and it called for gifts and mementoes innumerable. From *tienda* to *tienda* (shop) he went cannily beating down the price on the Chinese proprietors until he felt he had a reasonable price.

Laden with bundles of *carmelitos* and mysterious-looking boxes he rode up to Edward's *convento* and put forward a request. Would Edward run up to Palir with him and help out on the confessions, in fact do most of the confessions? He would be busy with arches and decorations and arranging these gifts. Edward gave a ready assent though it meant a fast and an early ride back the next morning to have Mass for his own people.

After a hasty lunch and a brief siesta, the two priests set out. It was the decline of day as the horses mounted the last stretch of trail to Palir. Night was already settling over the mountains, shrouding the trail with shadows and turning the valleys into pits of cavernous gloom. As they galloped along the rocky trail or plunged through clumps of bamboo foliage a whisper of a breeze arose, the night deepened about them, and the moon came over the line of a hill.

Suddenly there came a shout from Father Nicholas. "Look out, look out, Father Courtney! In back of you — a dog!"

Still going at a spanking pace Edward jerked around in his saddle. "Dog?" he yelled back. "Where? I don't see any."

"Right at your horse's tail," Father Nicholas shouted. Edward looked in amazement at his companion. There was no evidence of a dog, yet the eyes of Father Nicholas were fixed in manifest trepidation upon some object, invisible to Edward. "Nonsense," the young missionary said. "Look!" and swinging aloft his riding whip he sent it whistling in an arc backward and forward in the rear of his plunging mount. The whip cut unresisting air.

"Oh," said Father Nicholas, "it's gone."

Edward reined in his horse and allowed his companion to draw up alongside of him. "What's wrong with you, Father Nicholas?" he queried. "There was nothing there."

"There was, Father," the other affirmed. "A whale of a dog, as black as death, its teeth bared. I've never seen one that size in the Islands. It gave me the creeps. When you swung your whip it jumped off the trail and vanished."

"Father Nicholas, you're not sick? You're not feverish, are you?"

"But I tell you I am as clear in the head as —" the priest began to protest.

"Let's go," Edward interrupted, "we'll discuss it at Palir. We've got to get those confessions done."

At Palir old Benito was waiting for the tardy padres. As he unsaddled their horses Father Nicholas began at once to tell about the mysterious appearance. The reaction was not what he had bargained for. Benito's jaw dropped and his eyes widened until their whites were disturbingly evident in the gleam of the lantern he held in his hand.

"Who saw the dog?" the old man finally quavered.

"Father Nicholas," said Edward. "Must have a touch of fever, I think," he added jokingly.

"Yes, but the dog was after you," retorted Father Nicholas.

Benito disregarded their banter. Going up to Edward he reverently kissed the priest's hand and said. "Pray for me, Padre," and turning, went off toward the chapel.

The next morning when Edward left the *convento* and approached his horse he was amazed to see a gathering of people evidently awaiting him. It soon became obvious that Benito had passed the word along about the dog. Once he understood the cause of their sad faces Edward at once tried to dispel the superstitious tenseness that hung over them. They refused to have their minds altered. They gazed at him with wide, wondering, almost pitying eyes, like people gazing upon a sheep going forth to the slaughter. They kissed his hand, they reiterated their devotion and gratitude to him, they spoke words of admiration and praise to him until sheer modesty forced him to set spurs to his horse and he ploughed off and up into the glad sunlight of the mountain trail.

It was the outset of the rainy season, and the Sunday Mass was over. At midday thunderous heaps of black clouds

grouped loweringly over the mountains and the air grew ominously still. Suddenly round the rim of the sky snaky-veined fingers of lightning clawed through the clouds. With a shattering clap of thunder a terrific downpour set in. The dusty streets of the village turned into muddy streams. The few people who had ventured abroad rushed for shelter to their homes. Soon the village of Calapan was nothing but a collection of bedraggled huts, mud, cascading water.

Toward evening the steps of the *convento* vibrated to a shout. "Apooool!"

Mias hastened out to the veranda and held conference with a figure whose rain mantle of dried grass stuck out from his shoulders.

"Faddaire," the boy announced, "there is one dying — a berry bad one — he drinks that water in the field yesterday and maybe he hab cholera."

"Saddle the horse, Mias," the priest commanded, quickly rising from his desk. "I'll get my things from the church."

"Faddaire —," Mias said, "It is on the other side of the river. Berry much water now," he warned.

"Oh, I'll try the upper ford. The horse can make it."

Mias watched him depart. Off into the slanting rain he rode, his head bent forward against the glistening rods of water that drove down on him. At the end of the street the priest's head lifted; and through the curtain of rain the boy heard a snatch of song.

"That is his custom," smiled the boy to the bedraggled messenger who was sprawled on the veranda. "The Faddaire sings when it is bad —" and he turned to watch the priest again. A terrific burst of rain came down and the curtain of waters closed down on the priest crouched over the pommel of his saddle.

"The Christ having sung a hymn went out to Calvary —"

"'Abal!" Mias exclaimed, "what do you say?"

"It is a line from the *pasión*," mumbled the befuddled and shivering messenger. "I sing the *pasión* in our village."

"Come! I give you *tuba*," said the practical Mias.

Dawn broke gray and drizzly. Mias who had waited up till ten o'clock the previous night for the priest's return knocked on the door of his room. He opened the door and saw that the bed had not been occupied. "The river is bad," he mused, "the Faddaire must stay on the other side last night." He went out on the front veranda and then froze with horror. At the gate stood a saddleless, mud-blobbed specimen of a horse!

"Jesús, Maria, José!" ejaculated the boy. Swiftly he scurried over to the Presidencia. Like a whisper of death the news ran through the village. Soon excited men and wide-eyed boys came filtering out of the huts and a crowd of them hastened off to the river.

All day long they toiled in the mud and rain, searching the bends and bayous of the stream, the boys testing likely spots and pools with bamboo poles, the men wading about rocks and scanning the eddies. Evening saw them all back in the village, dejected, tired, and unsuccessful.

The next day in response to a messenger, Father Nicholas sloshed into town. At the head of another group he scoured the river as far as its outlet. They finally found the missionary's saddle bags. They never found his body.

The Calapan River is the offspring of the China Sea. From that swelling sea its waters came. Back into it they recede. Edward Courtney, too, went back, this rivulet of red love, back into the overwhelmingness of the Sacred Heart's red ocean of love. Somewhere in the China Sea his body is lost, until the trumpet of the Last Day shall summon forth the records. In the Master's divine paradox, he gave his life that he might find it. His work goes on.

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